

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET 15 SEPTEMBER 2008

EDUCATION HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

REPORT OF HEAD OF BSF, RESOURCES & SOCIAL REGENERATION

1.0 PURPOSE

To request Members' approval of the revised Education Home to School Transport Policy – revised as a result of the LA's duty to extend provision of transport assistance for low income families.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the policy be approved and implemented with effect from September 2008.

3.0 SUMMARY

The Education and Inspections Act 2006, with effect from September 2008, extends the right to free home to school transport to all secondary-aged pupils from low income families. Pupils from low income families will be entitled to transport assistance to any one of their 3 nearest schools if the distance is between 2-6 miles, and to the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief if the distance is between 2-15 miles.

Children from low income groups are defined in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 as those who are entitled to free school meals, or those whose families are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit.

4.0 PREVIOUS MINUTES

September 2004.

5.0 INFORMATION

The Council's Education Home to School Transport Policy was last approved by Cabinet in 2004.

New government legislation places additional duties on Local Authorities to extend the provision of transport to children from low income groups – to any one of their 3 nearest schools if the distance is

between 2-6 miles and to the nearest faith school if the distance is between 2-15 miles. The revised policy incorporates these requirements.

To date, T&W has not received many requests from low income families whose children will be starting secondary school in September 2008, as a result of the new legislation.

The whole policy has been reviewed in order to ensure that the Council's procedures provide each eligible pupil with the most appropriate form of transport assistance. Definitions have been expanded to try and avoid any ambiguity and clearly define which groups and individuals are eligible for transport and in what circumstances.

The assessment process for children with complex medical needs will be much more rigorous and a detailed checklist/risk assessment will be completed upon receipt of a request for transport assistance.

5.1 Background

Prior to the legislation in the Education & Inspections Act 2006 applications for home to school transport were considered according to the criteria in the policy – income was not taken into account.

The initial minimum distance criterion used for all secondary applications was 3 miles and the maximum distance criterion was 10 miles; an application may then have been considered on SEN grounds.

The minimum distance criterion which must be considered with effect from admission in September 2008 for low income groups is 2 miles, to a maximum of 6 miles, to any one of their 3 nearest schools. Low income groups will also be entitled to transport assistance to the nearest school requested on the basis of the family's religion or belief if the distance is between 2 and 15 miles.

5.2 Equality & Diversity

The policy has been reviewed in liaison with the Council's Equalities Officer and subject of an Equality & Diversity assessment.

5.3 Environmental Impact

The environmental impact should be slight.

It is anticipated that the increase in the number of requests for transport assistance (from low income groups) will be relatively small.

Wherever possible, the Council will issue an eligible pupil with a bus pass to travel on a public service vehicle.

5.4 Legal Comment

The proposed amendments to the Education Home to School Transport Policy are required to ensure the Authority meets its statutory obligations under the Education and Inspections Act 2006

5.5 Links with Corporate Priorities

The policy links to the following corporate priorities:-
Giving children and young people the best possible start in their lives.
Maintaining a high quality, attractive and sustainable environment.
An efficient, effective and customer-focused council that delivers value-for-money for the community.

5.6 Opportunities and Risks

The opportunities and risks associated with this revision of the policy have been identified and assessed. Arrangements will be put in place to manage the risks and maximise the opportunities that have been identified.

5.7 Financial Implications

The increased provision of transport for low income families only came into effect for children transferring to secondary school in September 2008; it is very early to predict the financial impact. Based on applications received to date, it is anticipated that there will only be a few additional pupils who will be entitled to transport assistance as a result of the new legislation.

6.0 WARD IMPLICATIONS

District wide implications.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Education and Inspections Act 2006
DCSF Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance – May 2007
Education Home to School Transport Policy – September 2004

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