

HOME TO SCHOOL/COLLEGE TRANSPORT – DISCRETIONARY AREAS OF POLICY

Report By: Head of Policy and Resources

Wards Affected

Countywide

Purpose

1. To approve the remit, membership and timetable of a group to consider discretionary policies on home to school/college transport.

Financial Implications

2. The financial implications of current and possible changes will be considered by the group.

Report

3. At the meeting on 14th July, 2003, this Committee resolved to establish a group to consider those areas in which the Council currently operates discretionary arrangements i.e.
 - walking distances to pick up points
 - travelling home on school transport
 - denominational transport
 - charges for post-16 transport
 - charges for vacant seats
4. It was suggested that the range of options for modifying these policies should be considered, with an assessment of their implications for:
 - a. enrolments at schools in the County
 - b. the provision of school places as set out in the School Organisation Plan
 - c. school budgets
 - d. parents and families
 - e. the environment, especially overall traffic volumes and effects on traffic flows around the start and end of the school day.

5. At its meeting on the 12th September the Committee decided to await clarification of the Government's intentions following the publication of the consultation document "Travelling to School: a good practice guide". In light of this publication and from attendance at a DfES seminar it is understood that the DfES are currently seeking views of local education authorities and others prior to making any legislative changes. Topics of discussion at the seminar included:
- powers to determine school session time
 - DfES asked to define national school terms.
 - Management arrangements to allow multi-tripping of school transport vehicles.
 - deregulation of the 2 and 3 mile qualification criteria which would allow the LEA to impose charges for journeys of any length.
 - School Travel Plans and the creation of cycle and walking routes to/from school.
6. It is not clear that the DfES have a clear view what should happen in the future other than suggest that it is now timely for review of the arrangements associated with the transport of children to school should take place. It is therefore appropriate for the LEA to have a debate taking account of these potential changes when reviewing Council's current discretionary arrangements.
7. The DfES are inviting LEAs to pilot schemes in the autumn of 2004, and it is suggested the group now widen its remit to develop proposals for consideration as a pilot as well as consider the implication for the areas identified in paragraphs 3 and 4 above.
8. It is proposed that the group comprise 6 members of this committee, namely -
- (i) the representative of the R.C. Diocese
 - (ii) the representative of the Church of England Diocese
 - (iii) a representative of parents
 - (iv) the vice-chairman of the Scrutiny Committee
 - (v) 2 other councillors not involved in current Best Value reviews
9. The suggested work programme and timetable are as follows -
- By 10th December, 2003** Meeting to agree content of initial consultation
- 1st January – 14th February** Consultation with relevant groups.
- By end of April** Consideration of responses from Consultation and DfES Final Report.

By end of May Report of Group completed.

June Report to Scrutiny Committee.

Although this timetable would not allow any significant change to be brought in before September, 2005 or 2006, it would allow a bid to be made to operate a pilot in the autumn of 2004.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT (i) the proposed working group be established as indicated in this report;

(ii) the members of working group be nominated where necessary.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- **None identified.**