

Changes to Herefordshire schools and post 16 SEN transport policy

Overview and Scrutiny

- Context
 - The council situation
 - Action is proportionate
 - Proper consultation
 - Equality, diversity and respect for human rights
- Cost modelling (achievable, realistic and proportionate)
- Response to consultation
- Justification for the approach to nearest school (not Herefordshire)
- Post 16 SEN proposals
- Effect on families and holidays
- Affordability and choices for September 2014
- Sustainability and Sustainable Modes of Transport Strategy for schools

Summary and reason for making the decisions

Context - The Council Situation

- Savings of £33m over next 3 years
- Policy decisions in the light of this
 - 1) To provide the statutory minimum
 - 2) 2) Where there is a charge it should be at full cost recovery

*Reference the Medium Financial Resource Strategy 2013/16
agreed full council February 18th 2013*

Charging principles agreed June 2011 (appendix C)

Context - Transport

- Opportunity to model best practice in transport procurement by having integrated team.
- There is a minimum requirement for home to school transport (distance, safe walking and extended rights)
- Post 16 students with SEN could make a contribution
- Other LAs are taking the same approach

Policy focus -

- To change the school transport entitlement policy from nearest and catchment to nearest only.
- To introduce a charge for post 16 SEN students
- Maximise charging potential
- Make a more integrated team to coordinate all aspects of transport

Who will be affected?

- 850 pupils and their families (580 secondary and 270 primary) (24% of those transported or 4% of all pupils)

There are 21,400 mainstream pupils of whom 3600 are currently eligible for free home to school transport. (17%)

- 110 post 16 SEN students with SEN are currently transported free of charge

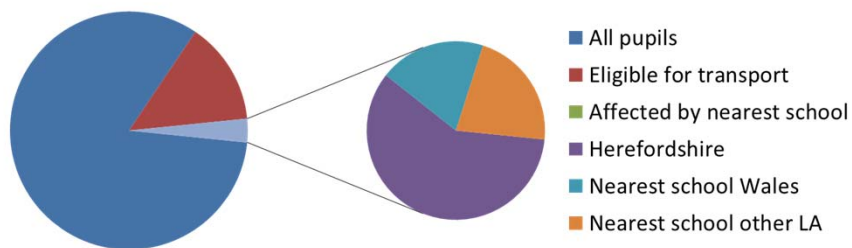
Currently circa 1200 post 16 riders

- Schools - particularly those near borders
- Wider residents of Herefordshire

Travel/mobility, costs and environmental impact

Pupils affected

Proportion of pupils affected



Approach

- Model the implications – sound out ideas
- Formally consult on some specific changes.
- Modify and amend the policy areas in the light of the feedback from consultation
- Undertake an equalities impact assessment
- Reach a considered decision

The Local Authority budget

- Net annual expenditure on home to school transport is circa £3.5m (£4.6m expenditure and £1.1 income)
- There are approximately 200 contracts across the county and the daily cost is about £25,000
- Average cost of a rider on all school transport is £800
- Current charge for a vacant seat or post 16 rider is £660. (return daily rate circa £3.50)

Financial modelling

- Dependent on parents choices
- If all affected went to their nearest school the saving would be circa £680,000 a year. (not considered realistic)
- Assumption - mainstream pupils (based on existing patterns of parental preference for all other children)
The £250,000 in the consultation and report assumed over time 60% (500) move to their nearest school – 20% (175) buy a vacant seat and 20% (175) make their own arrangements
- Assumption SEN – continued provision of independent travel training

Financial Modelling

- The Welsh border consideration

160 pupils max cost saving of £128,000 (160 X £800) assumed
cost saving £ 51,000

- The English local authority

180 pupils (150 in distance) max cost saving is £120000 (150X
£800) assumed £48,000

- KS 4 exemption

£31000 per term per year group

- Phasing of full cost recovery

£50 increase in charge realises approx. £75,000

Financial impact of decision

- Families –

- Those not eligible to free transport to pay £18.95 week on LA contracted vehicles (£720 a year) -still not full cost recovery. Other arrangements might be made

- Schools and budgets for pupils

- If pupils move the loss is approx. £4000 per pupil to the school
- Schools could subsidise and/or coordinate transport for those who want it

- The Local Authority overall

- Max effect £680,000 saving – considered unlikely
- Post 16 £74,000 contribution (110 x£660)

- Transport services more widely

- Opportunity to integrate (budgeted savings of?)

Consultation

- Initial soundings with web questionnaire and meetings May/ June 2013
- Extensive detailed consultation October November 2013
 - Web
 - Written submissions
 - Petitions
 - Officers attending meetings
 - Head teacher /officer DCS/ lead member meetings
 - School Forum

Consultation Feedback

- Section 10.3 of the report
 - Nearest school 512 email returns, written submissions, two petitions, 27 children. Parish Councillors, head teachers.
 - SEN 39 responses

Impact on schools

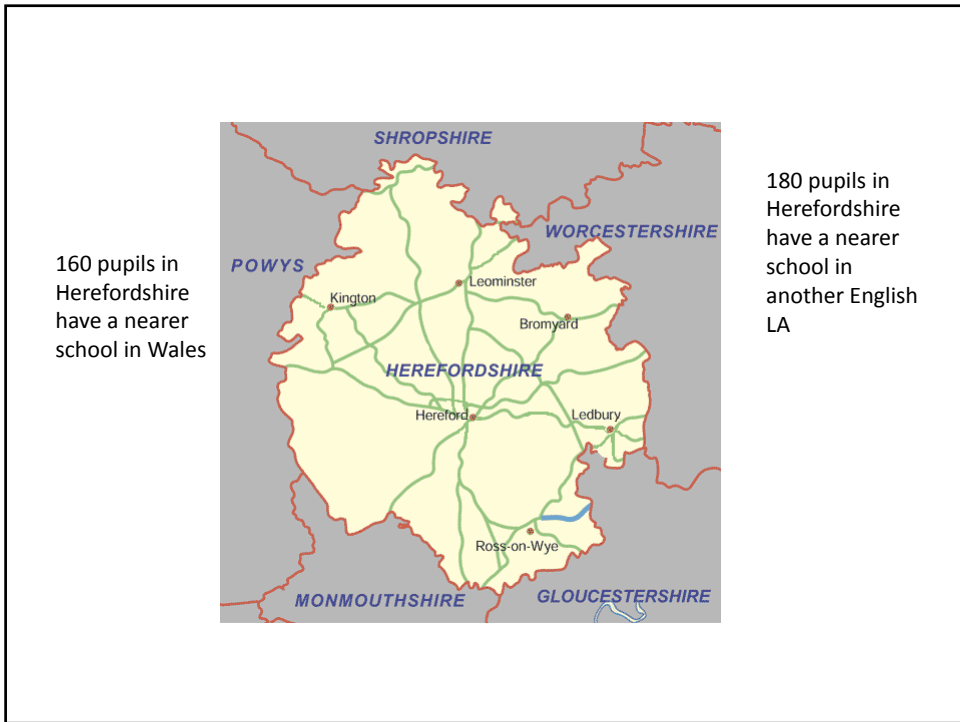
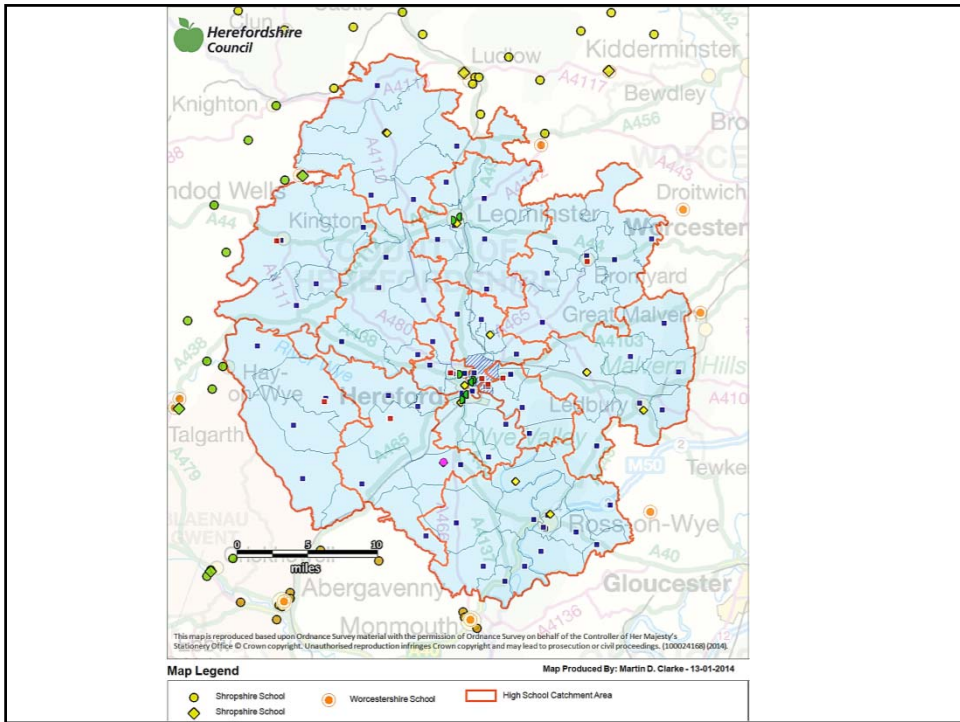
- Loss of pupils(therefore income)

Schools are net importers of pupils from surrounding LAs (and would remain so even if all Herefordshire pupils went to their nearest school which was in another LA) (secondary school 300 + Other LA pupils on roll with 180 nearer English LA pupils net import of 120+)

- Herefordshire has a high number of surplus places so there is a lot of competition for pupils.
- Some schools (eg. John Kyrle, Wigmore, Weobley, QE, St Marys) are already running and/or coordinating transport

The Herefordshire borders

- Herefordshire should provide free transport to the nearest school in England. (The Welsh curriculum is very different)
- Offering free transport to nearest Herefordshire school would lead to less savings.
- Would still need to meet the cost of transport where parents/carers express a preference for the nearest school which is out of county.



Equalities Impact Assessment

(to protect the vulnerable)

- Changes to post 16 SEN may impact on vulnerable and protected group but:
 - Other grants and opportunities are available particularly the bursary scheme that can be applied for individually or through Post 16 provider
- Changes could affect low income families wanting a preferred school.
 - Extended rights are available for secondary (choice of three schools between 2 and 6 miles)

Holiday issues

- From September 2015 schools can determine their own holiday dates.
- Neighbouring local authorities agree 195 days
 - schools determine 5 of their own professional development days

Affordability - timing of introduction

- Have easy ways to pay. Eg monthly direct debit
- Cheaper local solutions could be found by communities, schools and the integrated transport unit.
- 6 months gives time to develop these (contracts require 28 days notice)

School Travel Strategy

- Set out in the Local Transport Plan (part of the Council's policy framework)
 - Current plan adopted March 2013 and covers 2013/14 to 2014/15 (website)
 - Progress reported each year in the LTP Annual Progress Report (website)
 - Focus on supporting schools to develop travel plans and promoting sustainable modes directly to pupils and parents
- Changes in Government (DfE) support
 - withdrew grant funding in 2011 for Travel Advisers and in support of Sustainable Travel General Duty (£47K)
 - Stopped collection of school travel data by removing questions from the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) July 2011

School Travel – our support

- LTP/S106 (capital investment):
 - pedestrian/cycle access, sheltered waiting areas for parents, 20mph zones, school warning lights etc.
- Local Sustainable Transport Fund/Bikeability (revenue support):
 - Assistance with travel plan development/review
 - Supporting car sharing and links to wider travel choices programme
 - School travel grants supporting progress on travel plans
 - Bikeability training offered in primary schools and year 7s
 - Annual campaigns (walk to school/be bright be seen etc.)
 - Additional support from February 2014 with Sustrans

Impact of decision

- Policy and Strategy:
 - Supporting access to the nearest school should, over time reduce transport impacts of school travel and increase economies of scale for provided transport
- Service Planning
 - Close liaison between IPTU and Admissions Team to ensure transport provision is aligned to needs and support parents/schools when entitlement changes
 - Meetings with head teachers to understand local impacts and how schools might respond
 - Opportunities to integrate schools services with public bus services and reduce costs and sustain transport services for wider community benefit

Council decisions

- Should be providing the statutory minimum and money will be saved.
- Mitigation
 - Herefordshire children should have an education in England if they want one
 - Give fair notice of changes (September 2014) and phase it for those doing GCSE's and level 2 qualifications.
 - Phase move to full cost recovery of vacant seats.
 - Promote alternatives with integrated transport team
 - Keep things under detailed review to judge impact on vulnerable pupils and individual schools.