

Minutes of the Executive

30th September 2004

-: Present :-

Councillor Harris (Chairman)

Councillors Charlwood, Jennings, Lomas, McHugh and Stringer

(Also in attendance: Councillors Brennan, Stocks and Turnbull)

265. Apology. An apology for absence was received from Councillor James.

Executive) are set out in the Record of Decisions in Appendix 1 to these Minutes.

266. Matters for Consideration. The Executive considered the following matter, full details of which (including the decision of the

266.1 School and College Transport Policy.

Leader of the Council



APPENDIX 1

**to the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive
held on 30th September 2004**

RECORD OF DECISION

SCHOOL AND COLLEGE TRANSPORT POLICY

Decision Taker

The Executive at its meeting held on 30th September 2004.

Decision

- (i) That the position of pupils currently in receipt of free transport to denominational and grammar schools be protected until such time as they transfer to a new phase of education at the end of Year 6 or Year 11 on or after 1st September 2005;
- (ii) that for pupils joining or transferring to selective and denominational schools after 1 September 2005, the existing policy to decide entitlement to assistance with transport to denominational and selective schools be amended. The new policy to offer assistance only where the school is designated to serve the home address and the school is beyond the statutory walking distance from the home address;
- (iii) that where pupils are eligible for assistance with transport to selective and denominational schools through the exercise of discretionary powers, a parental contribution be required after 1st September 2005;
- (iv) that in the 2005-2006 school year, the contribution will be £200 per pupil and that the Council will subsequently review the level of contribution on an annual basis;
- (v) that the contribution be remitted from pupils who meet the eligibility criteria for free school meals. An entitlement to remission will last for the whole of the school year in which it is established and eligibility for continued remission be reviewed annually before the start of each academic year, such remission policy would subsequently be reviewed on an annual basis; and
- (vi) that no change be made to the policy on eligibility for assistance with post 16 transport, but the Council will, from 1st September 2005, seek a financial contribution from all post 16 students, ending its scheme of remission for students from low-income families in the light of the availability of the Education Maintenance Allowances.

Reason for Decision

To reduce areas of discretionary spending in the light of the financial constraints faced by the Authority. The intention was to use the savings to support other Council priorities.

Information

At the meeting of the Executive held on 18th May 2004 (Minute 28.4), Members received Report LCS/21/04 setting out ways in which expenditure might be reduced.

The report explained that some transport was provided to meet statutory duties and some in the exercise of discretionary powers. In theory the Council was able to provide no discretionary transport and meet only its statutory duties. This would mean the withdrawal of all transport to denominational schools, selective schools and for all post 16 students.

APPENDIX 1 (continued)

The report highlighted it was inevitable that the focus of any review of expenditure would be on the significant proportion of expenditure that was used to provide transport at the discretion of the Council. The following options were identified:-

- (a) to cease to exercise discretion;
- (b) to continue to exercise discretion, but to introduce a charge for transport; and
- (c) to maintain the status quo and exercise discretion to provide free transport.

Members received report LCS/28/04 reiterating the background to the review of expenditure on school transport and set out the results of the consultation exercise that had been undertaken in accordance with a previous instruction of the Executive. In considering the report, Members also had regard to the views raised by the School Transport Review Panel at its meeting held on 27th September 2004.

In view of the financial difficulties faced by the Council, it was recommended that net expenditure on school transport be reduced through the introduction of charges for transport to denominational and selective schools and to vary the charging regime in respect of post 16 students.

In the case of pupils already attending denominational and selective schools, it was proposed that free transport should continue until those pupils entered a new phase of education. A charge to parents of £200 was suggested as a contribution towards school transport. It was acknowledged, however, that the Council would need to take into account the position of low-income families and remit contributions from those who regularly met the criteria for free school meals.

As regards post 16 students, it was proposed that there should be no change to the policy on eligibility for assistance with post 16 transport. It was the intention, however, to end the policy to remit contributions from students from low-income families given the introduction of the Education Maintenance Allowances which the majority of post 16 students would be eligible for if they came from a family with an income of less than £30,000.

Members noted that under the proposals, the school transport charging and remission policy would be reviewed on an annual basis.

Alternative options considered and rejected at the time of the decision

Report LCS/28/04 identified a number of alternative options:-

Not to change the existing policy.

To change the policy for existing passengers and not phase the introduction of the new policy as recommended.

To operate a different remission policy from that recommended.

Is this a Key Decision? (Give reference number if applicable)

Yes – Reference Number X51/2003

Does the call-in procedure apply? (If no, please give reason)

Yes

Declarations of interest (including details of any relevant dispensations issued by the Standards Committee)

Councillors Brennan and McHugh declared a personal interest.

APPENDIX 1 (continued)

Published

1st October 2004

Implementation

This decision will come into force and may be implemented on 11th October 2004 unless the call-in procedure is triggered (as set out in Standing Orders in relation to Overview and Scrutiny).