

People Policy Development Group Thursday, 18th August 2011

School Transport

The Council's home to school transport policy provides assistance for pupils travelling to primary, secondary, special schools and post 16 colleges. Some assistance with travel is provided as part of a legal obligation placed upon the Council. The Council's home to school transport policy also provides assistance for some families such as those whose children attend denominational and selective schools which is not statutory. This is provided under a discretionary power of the Council. This assistance is discretionary and the Council has determined that parents are charged a contribution towards the cost of this discretionary travel. The Council's home to school transport policy has not changed for 2011/12.

Assistance with travel to community schools that are not the designated school for the pupils address is not available in the Council's home to school transport policy. Assistance for pupils to denominational and selective schools is more advantageous than for pupils attending community schools.

In the 2010/ 2011 academic year there were 203 11-16 pupils assisted in travel to St Cuthbert Mayne and selective schools. There were 92 post 16 pupils assisted in travelling to St Cuthbert Mayne and selective schools. The cost of the Council continuing to provide assistance at the 2010/11 level to these travelling pupils would be £66,000.

Every year the Council reviews the level of parental contribution and for September 2011 the Council has decided to increase the parental contribution for discretionary travel from £245 per year to £490. The Council has acknowledged the position of siblings in families by not increasing the charge for second siblings and waiving the charge completely for third siblings. This increase in parental contribution is part of a wider range of measures which the Council has implemented as part of significant savings across the whole Council.

Option 1 - Phased over 5 years

At the meeting of Council held on 13 July 2011, Councillors Pentney and Faulkner (J) submitted the following motion, which was referred to the Mayor for consideration. The Mayor has requested that the motion be considered by the People (Children) Policy Development Group at a public meeting to enable members of the community to give their views.

“We call upon the Mayor and Council to stagger the rise in the cost in school transport by instigating gradual increase over a 5 year period. The costs of this should be met by use of the Council reserves. This will help families by:

- Reducing the increase to families at a time when many are suffering from higher utility and other charges.

- Allow parents to consider their budgets and make extra provision when deciding the options for education of their children.”

Based on 2010/11 pupil travel numbers for 11-16 pupils the cost to the Council for this option is likely to be in the region of £100,000 over 5 years.

The following alternative options have been identified:

Option 2 - Increase the parental charge by £2.50 per week (£130 per year) from September 2011 with relief for second and third siblings with the charge rising to full cost in September 2012.

Based on 2010/11 pupil travel numbers the total cost to the Council is approximately £25,000 over the full academic year for the reduced parental charge increase and £5,500 for sibling relief totalling £30,500.

Option 3 - Increase the parental charge to £490 from September 2011 with relief for second and third siblings as previously agreed by the Council as part of the Revenue Budget setting process for 2011/2012 at its adjourned meeting held on 9 February 2011.

Based on 2010/11 pupil travel numbers this option is a cost for the Council over the full academic year of approximately £5,500.

Matt Redwood

9 August 2011