

2011/12 Budget - Savings Proposal

Service: POLICY PERFORMANCE AND SUPPORT

Proposal Number: CEF 1

Description of Proposal - Transport

The proposal is to make changes to the current provision of Home to College Transport and to align this with a number of additional efficiencies to the arrangements for contracting transport provision and to the rigour of decision making within the parameters of the Council's current policy.

Consideration was given to extending the savings further by changing the current discretionary arrangements for provision of transport on denominational grounds. At this stage however the Council will not be proposing any reductions in this aspect of transport provision. However in subsequent years the Council is acutely aware that maintaining the current level of provision on denominational transport will become increasingly difficult in the light of the overall reductions to public sector funding arrangements.

The specific policy changes and efficiencies within this proposal are

- Reduce the entitlement to free Home to College transport from the current all students studying more than 3 miles from home, to students studying more than 3 miles from home where the family is on low income (i.e. in receipt of income support)
- For those accessing Home to College Transport for students living more than 3 miles and where the family is not considered to be low income, transport provision from the Council will be on a cost-plus basis only. As a consequence the charge for accessing this transport will be in the region of £X per annum. The final cost will be published within a revised Home to College Transport statement in January 2011
- Revise the funding arrangements and provision of taxis for Home to School Transport for pupils accessing 6th day provision for exclusion and accessing the Pupil Referral Unit.
- Reduce the costs of home to school transport for pupils with Special Educational Needs by revising policy and adjusting criteria for access aligned with some capital investment at Treetops site on Buxton Road. Improving the access and ground conditions at the new Treetops site, for parents to drop off and pick up pupils, will remove a number of temporary home to school SEN transport awards which are linked to site conditions at the new facility
- There will also be further revisions to the criteria used by SEN Case Management panels and the introduction of a restriction on access to Home to School transport for parents who are already in receipt of mobility allowances to support their children's needs
- Make further efficiency savings through effective procurement of remaining contracts
- Increasing charging for places on concessionary seat scheme

CURRENT POSITION

Statutory Requirements

- Statutory responsibility to provide free home to school transport for certain children where
 - Child is eligible as defined by the Act
 - Child below the age of 8 living more than 2 miles from nearest school / above 8 living 3 miles from nearest school
 - Child lives within statutory distance but LA considers it necessary such as route to school is unsafe

Current Policy and Extension Beyond Statutory

- Goes beyond statutory requirements because it
 - Offers free transport to over 8's in primary at 2 miles distance when statutory is 3 miles
 - Offers denominational transport to schools at 2 miles primary and 3 miles secondary when statutory is only for low-income families
 - Offers post-16 at 3 miles when there is technically no statutory requirements beyond to ensure learners of sixth form age are able to access provision, and if support for access is required, then assess and provide

Current Levels of Demand On The Policy and Budget

- The total budget for this year is 2.67 million (last year's budget was 2.68 million and year before that was 2.63 million)
- Overall, the total numbers of home to school transport awards last year (across all criteria including SEN and PRU awards) was up almost 9.5% on the previous year
- For last year 1452 young people were in receipt of free transport to post 16 provision

Comparative spend on both Home to School and Home to College Transport are high in Thurrock. In 2008-2009 benchmarking review it was established that

- **Mainstream School Transport**
 - Thurrock's spending per head on mainstream home to school transport was well above the national average
 - Spending on mainstream home to school transport was above the average for Unitary Authorities
 - Thurrock home to school transport funding above Statistical Neighbour average, for mainstream pupil funding level
 - Home to school transport funding for mainstream school pupils is higher than unitary authorities on average (though below unitary average for SEN transport)
 - Only area where transport costs for mainstream are below average is comparison between Thurrock and rest of Eastern Region – we believe this is in main because 6 large counties in our region with higher unit costs related to longer average distances
- **Post 16 Transport**
 - Post 16 transport costs per head in Thurrock were higher than the national average, our statistical neighbours and most other unitaries
 - Post 16 transport costs per head in Thurrock were four times higher than the national average
 - Post 16 transport was the highest among our statistical neighbours
 - Considering the effect on the large counties on costs for mainstream pupils, it puts our post – 16 costs into perspective and highlights just how high they are in comparison with elsewhere
 - It is more than double the average for the Eastern Region
 - It is the second highest level of funding in the country for unitary authorities. The only unitary authority with higher post-16 costs is the Isle of Wight and they have the additional complication of transporting some students to mainland for post-16 provision

Proposed Saving

Proposed Saving in 2011/12 £382K	Proposed Saving in 2011/12 FTE Staff	Proposed Saving in full year £828K	Proposed Saving in full year FTE Staff
124K – Efficiency saving through re-tendering contracts for 11-12 and beyond 11K (Two Terms - Increasing charging for concessionary spare seat scheme from current £240 per year to £300, based only on	N/A	150K - Efficiency saving through re-tendering contracts for 11-12 and beyond 17K (Increasing charging for concessionary spare seat scheme based only on current level of take up)	N/A

current level of take up) 247K (Two Terms - Changes to post-16 transport requiring concessionary charge of £240 per student – and based on current levels of demand)		220K – Changes to capital infrastructure to reduce home to school SEN transport demand for Treetops 70K (estimate) – Changes to SEN criteria and removing access to free transport for parents in receipt of mobility allowances) 371K (Changes to post-16 transport requiring concessionary charge of £240 per student – and based on current levels of demand)	
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	2011/12 £'000s	Full Year £'000s
People	£382K	£828K
Property		
Third Party	£	£
Infrastructure/Kit		

Base Budget 2010/11

	£'000s
Expenditure	
Employees	0
Other Direct Running Costs (Premises, Transport and Supplies)	2,550.8
Third Party Payments	0
Transfer Payments	0
Capital Financing Costs	0
Support Services Costs	0
Gross Expenditure	2,550.8
Income	
Sales, Fees and Charges	(3.4)
Grant and External Contributions	0
Support Services Income	0
Gross Income	(3.4)
Net Expenditure	2,547.4
Base Budget 2009/10 Full time Equivalent Staff	0

Recent Changes to Base Budget

	£'000s
Growth approved in the 2010/11 Base Budget	0
Savings approved in the 2010/11 Base Budget	0

Impact of Proposal on public / services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the changes potentially unpopular and likely to be subject of significant debate • Some changes likely to be unpopular with parents and young people themselves who will be affected by the changes • Changes to policy will not deliver savings unless current over-spending is also addressed. This will require <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Programme to review and become more efficient and cost focused in decision making on awards for home to school transport within social care, within Pupil Support Service and within Special Educational Needs ○ Review and improvement to contract procurement and management
Impact of Proposal on performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reductions at post-16 may have an impact on EET and on raising aspirations though continuing to offer transport to those from low income families should mitigate the impact of the proposed change to a considerable extent ○ Possible impact on aims around raising aspirations by encouraging more students to access 6th form provision though again continuing to offer transport to those from low income families should mitigate the impact of the proposed change to a considerable extent and in addition the increasing development of more locally accessible 6th form provision in Palmers and at several Thurrock schools will also act as mitigating factor on possible impact of this proposal
Impact of Proposal on staff	
Practical requirements regarding implementation and timetable	<p>Any change to policy affecting schools has to be included in publication on admission arrangements for secondary schools for 11-12 which would be published around Oct 2010</p> <p>Any change to policy on post-16 transport would need to be published by Jan 2011 to take effect in the 2011-2012 academic year</p> <p>Proposed extensions to 6th form provision within borough align well with a change of transport policy</p>
Equalities Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nature of changes will mean that the number of older students affected by policy shifts will possibly be greater than those under the age of 16.