

## Wiltshire Council

### Denominational Home-to-School Transport – rapid scrutiny exercise (Children’s Services Select Committee)

8<sup>th</sup> September 2011

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#### Additional information provided for the rapid scrutiny meeting

**Note:** The information included below is in addition to that contained within the report to Cabinet, which is included elsewhere in this Agenda. References to the appropriate paragraph within the Cabinet report are included below where possible.

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#### 1. Financial implications

Further information has been requested about the figures and assumptions used in the calculation of the estimated savings for the three options shown in the ‘Financial Implications’ section of the report (paragraphs 25-26).

The calculations in respect of **Option 1** are shown in the table below:

1	Gross annual cost of provision (2010/11 costs)	£349,000	
2	Estimated income by 2013/14 (when phased introduction of charging begun in 2007 will be complete)	£166,000	<i>2010/11 income of £137,000, plus estimated additional income of £30,000 from new starters in 2011/12 - 2013/14</i>
3	Estimated net saving from withdrawing transport (on top of savings already expected from full introduction of 2007 charging policy)	£183,000	<i>Line 1 minus line 2</i>
4	Less adjustment for net cost of continuing to provide transport for denominational post 16s under ‘same cost’ policy ( <i>most denominational post 16 students currently receiving transport will continue to be eligible for transport assistance under the terms of the Council’s post 16 transport policy, providing that the cost to the Council is no greater than the cost of transport to the designated sixth form school or FE college for their address</i> )	£11,000	<i>Assumed that all 41 denominational post 16 students continue to receive transport, at a net cost of £268 per head (cost of season ticket on the public bus, less income from post16 charge)</i>
5	Less estimated cost of providing transport for entitled children from low income families	£10,000	<i>In 2010/11 were only 5 children receiving free transport. Assumed that</i>

			<i>this doubles to 10, and that most but not all can travel on season ticket – assume unit cost of £1000</i>
6	Less assumption about cost of providing transport for pupils transferring to another school, whose year group at the local school is full ( <i>if the local school is unable to admit the pupil, the Council will have to provide free transport to the next nearest available school until the child leaves school</i> )	Yr1 £9,000 Yr2 £3,000 Yr3 £2,000 Yr4 £1,000	<i>Based on analysis of numbers receiving transport currently in each year group at denominational schools, and advice from DCE Admissions team about which year groups in local schools are at or near capacity. Assumed that 25% of pupils seek to transfer to local school, in which case would require free transport (bus season tickets) for 5 children from Corsham – Chippenham in 2012/3 reducing to nil in 2016/7, plus an 8 seat minibus Devizes – Melksham in 2012/3 only</i>
7	<b>Estimated saving from withdrawal of transport</b> (on top of savings already expected from introduction of 2007 charging policy)	Yr1 £153,000 Yr2 £159,000 Yr3 £160,000 Yr4 £161,000 Yr5 £162,000	<i>Line 3, less lines 4, 5 and 6</i>

## Option 2

The savings are estimated to be as for **Option 1**, adjusted as follows:

- Reduced by £27,000 in 2012/13 by payment to the schools towards the cost of transport for pupils in year 11 (estimated number of pupils 65, @ £409 per pupil)
- Increased by £6,000 in 2012/13 because the minibus from Devizes – Melksham would not be required (all of the pupils using this vehicle would be in year 11).

## Option 3

The savings are estimated to be as for **Option 1**, adjusted as follows:

- Reduced by £124,000 in 2012/13, reducing to £2,000 in 2017/18, by the transition payments to schools (calculated by number of pupils on transport in each affected year group, @ £409 per pupil)
- Increased as assumed will no longer require additional transport for pupils unable to transfer to the local school (line 6 in option 1 calculation table above)

## Sensitivity analysis

It is very difficult to predict the additional costs that might be incurred by the Council in providing additional transport where denominational pupils seek to transfer to the local school and the year group at the local school is full (line 6 in the option 1 calculation table above). The actual costs incurred will depend on many factors, including:

- The number of pupils who seek to transfer, which will depend on the individual decisions made by parents when it is known what alternative transport arrangements will be available, and at what cost;
- What spaces are available in each year group at the alternative local schools at the time;
- Whether (particularly for primary schools) the local school will agree to take 'over numbers';
- What type of transport is required and what price can be secured through tendering or negotiation.

The estimated savings in the report are based on an assumption that 25% of children currently receiving transport will seek to transfer. A '**worst case scenario**' has also been worked through to estimate the possible cost implication if all of the children currently receiving transport seek to transfer to the local school:

<b>Additional transport needed;</b>	<b>Estimated cost (£);</b>				
	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>
<b>Secondary</b>					
Bradford – Trowbridge (2 season tickets)	1200	1200	1200	0	0
Chippenham area villages – Abbeyfield (use existing school bus)	0	0	0	0	0
Corsham – Abbeyfield (7 season tickets)	4200	2400	0	0	0
Melksham – Trowbridge (1 season ticket)	600	600	600	0	0
Lavington and Devizes – Melksham (bus for 21 current year 9 pupils)	29,000	0	0	0	0
Lavington – Devizes (large taxi for 7 children)	6,000	6,000	0	0	0
<b>Primary</b>					
4 rural primary schools (Cherhill, Lacock, Gt Cheverell, Shaw) each requiring a taxi for 1 child ( <i>may be reduced if schools agree to take over numbers</i> )	24,000	18,000	18,000	12,000	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65,000</b>	<b>28,200</b>	<b>19,800</b>	<b>12,000</b>	<b>0</b>

The above estimates replace those in line 6 of the **Option 1** calculation and would reduce the **Option 1** savings as follows:

	<b>Estimated saving (£)</b>				
	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17 and beyond</b>
<b>Option 1</b> – assuming 25% of pupils currently receiving transport seek to transfer to local school (as in report)	£153,000	£159,000	£160,000	£161,000	£162,000
<b>Option 1</b> – ‘ <b>worst case scenario</b> ’ assuming that 100% of pupils currently receiving transport seek to transfer to local school	£97,000	£133,800	£142,200	£150,000	£162,000

## 2. Education costs

Questions have been asked about whether and to what extent the proposals will (in addition to the transport costs referred to in question 1 above) incur additional costs to the Council’s education budget, or impact on schools budget costs, if adjustments to staffing levels or facilities are required.

The budgets for individual maintained schools are funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and therefore any increases in costs would not represent a direct cost pressure to the Council but to the overall schools budget. Increases or decreases in overall pupil numbers are reflected in the annual DSG settlement which is based on pupil numbers in the January preceding the start of the financial year. Individual budgets for maintained schools in Wiltshire are also based on the January pupil count.

Consistent with the analysis carried out for admissions and transport costs elsewhere in this report, two scenarios have been modelled to examine the potential financial impact on the overall schools budget and for individual schools. The sensitivity analysis outlined in section 1 of the report also applies to the analysis of the financial impact on the schools budget.

The two scenarios considered are:

1. Assuming that **100%** of primary age pupils and all secondary pupils in years 7 to 9 who access transport choose to transfer to their home community school;
2. Assuming that **25%** of pupils in those year groups choose to transfer to their home community school. In this model it has been assumed that the impact is equal across all year groups.

A summary of the impact is attached as Appendix 1 and 1(a). For the purpose of the analysis, only changes in the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) funding have been included as it would not be possible to identify the potential impact on other formula factors

within the schools budget. Only pupil movements associated with the changes to denominational transport are shown and it is important to note that these are unlikely to be the only pupil movements from year to year. The model for secondary schools shows an increase in the overall number of pupils in Wiltshire schools because of the movement of pupils from schools in Bath and Swindon back to Wiltshire.

The analysis reflects Age Weighted Pupil Unit costs from the Wiltshire funding formula and therefore treats all of the schools as if they are maintained schools. A number of schools have converted to Academy status or are expected to convert prior to the implementation of any changes to transport arrangements. Academies are currently funded by the Young Person's Learning Agency (YPLA) and per pupil amounts for these schools are not known to the local authority. Academies are funded on an academic year basis and therefore any changes to pupil numbers are reflected at the start of the academic year.

For maintained schools changes to pupil numbers in September are reflected in the budget for the following financial year, however, should a school experience a significant increase in numbers on roll within a financial year, i.e., sufficient numbers to generate the need for an additional class, there is a mechanism within the funding formula to reflect the increased cost in year. Subject to the appropriate criteria being satisfied, as laid out in the local authority's funding scheme, this cost is met from the contingency held within the delegated schools budget. Based on the figures presented in the attached analysis it is possible that 1 secondary school could require additional funding in year if all pupils in years 7-9 who currently access transport were to move to their home community school.

Maintained schools are required to submit 3-year budgets to the local authority with years 2 and 3 based on estimated pupil numbers. If an individual school is forecasting a financial deficit as a result of reduced pupil numbers then the LA will work with that school to develop a financial recovery plan. For academies, any recovery plan would need to be agreed with the Young Person's Learning Agency (YPLA) who currently fund academies. Each school is considered on a case-by-case basis. Depending on the level of deficit forecast it is possible that schools would need to make reductions in staffing however it is not possible to estimate the likely cost of redundancies until pupil movements are known. If it is agreed that staffing reductions are necessary for financial recovery then redundancy costs are met from the centrally held Dedicated Schools Grant and are therefore a cost to the overall schools budget.

### **3. Admissions to other schools**

#### **Inter-year admissions and outside normal admissions rounds**

The LA Admissions Team recognise that if all pupils attending faith schools reapply to their local school they would need careful planning and placement. Until the actual numbers and individuals are known the Admission Team is unable to gauge the difficulties that might ensue in re-allocating places.

It is not possible to be definitive in relation to the impact on a particular school in terms of a drop in the number on roll; much would depend on the exact number. As the recommended option allows for a phased approach it is unlikely that any planned key stage 4 courses will need to reduce. Likewise the impact on individual students is difficult to assess and will depend on individual circumstances.

## Fair Access Protocol

- (i) The LA protocols would have to remain in place and all young people who chose not to retain their denominated place would have to be allocated a place. If the LA was unable to offer a preference stated on the application form then a reasonable alternative would be allocated as per the protocols for any other in year admission.
- (ii) Wiltshire Council does ensure that admission arrangements for schools in their area for which they are the admission authority comply with all statutory requirements.

## Admissions Forum

Admissions Forum has not been involved in discussions or decisions to do with the departmental transport issue that has arisen.

The Catholic Diocese of Clifton has been invited to all Admission Forum meetings and attend regularly but have not raised this as an issue.

The issue, as it has been raised to Cabinet, will be discussed on 2 September 2011 at the Admission Forum.

## **4. Impact on traffic levels around the schools**

Further information has been requested on the potential impacts of the proposals on traffic levels around the schools affected.

The extent of any traffic increase will depend on the extent to which alternative transport arrangements will be able to be made by the schools, the nature of these arrangements and the pricing policy adopted by the schools. The Council has offered to support the schools in either making their own arrangements or taking on responsibility for existing transport contracts where these exist, and is keen to work with them to make sure that transport continues to be available (further information on the nature of this support is included in Section 4 below). Nevertheless it is likely that if the charges for transport increase, this may encourage some parents to set up their own car-sharing arrangements if this is perceived to be a less costly alternative.

The numbers of children currently receiving transport are detailed in Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report. The only schools with significant numbers of pupils (in traffic terms) currently receiving transport are Trowbridge St. Augustines (302 pupils on transport), Bath St. Gregorys (69), and Corsham St. Patricks (30). It is not possible to give meaningful estimates of detailed traffic impacts as these will depend on;

- the nature and cost of the alternative transport arrangements that are made;
- how many parents decide to send their children to a different school;
- how many parents decide not to use whatever alternative transport is available and to use their car instead;

- how many will seek to reduce the cost and inconvenience of a daily car journey by setting up formal or informal car sharing arrangements.

The worst case scenario (in traffic terms) would be that no alternative transport arrangements are made; no children transfer to other schools; no car sharing takes place; and that all children currently at the school continue to attend and are taken to school alone by car. This would be a very unlikely outcome. For the reasons given above, it is very difficult to identify what the actual outcome would be, but the following scenario is given as an example;

Assumptions; 50% of pupils use alternative transport arrangements 25% transfer to other schools 25% travel by car Of these, 50% share with one other pupil			
	St Augustine's	St Gregory's	St Patrick's
Pupils receiving transport in 2010/11	302	69	30
Possible number travelling by car in future	76	18	8
Possible number of additional cars	57	14	6

##### **5. What support the Council would be able to offer to schools to make alternative transport arrangements**

A request has been made for more information about what support Council officers would be able to provide to schools to make alternative arrangements, to reduce the additional burden this would place on them (particularly for the primary schools for whom organising transport may be a significant burden) (please see paragraphs .

Officers in the Council's Passenger Transport Unit (PTU) have well established working relationships with the schools with the largest transport provision, and have already attended meetings at which possible future transport arrangements have been discussed. Support could be provided for the schools in a number of ways, including for example;

- Arranging for existing transport contract arrangements to be taken over by the school, or a 'parents club';
- Discussing with local transport operators whether they would be prepared to run a fare paying service on a commercial basis;
- Providing advice and assistance in designing the most cost effective transport routings, including whether it would be possible to reduce the cost by linking these with other Council transport contracts;
- Advising on the availability of suitable existing public transport services or of spare seats on other Council transport contracts in the area;
- Providing advice on tendering or negotiation with transport operators;

- Signposting to advice on local availability and possible use of community transport vehicles, and complying with the legal / technical requirements of using school minibuses.

It is recognised that different types of transport arrangement will be appropriate in different circumstances. Where there are large numbers of children to be carried, it is envisaged that support will be given to transfer existing bus arrangements or possibly seek a bus operator prepared to run a fare-paying bus service. Several secondary schools in Wiltshire (including St Augustine's) already run some transport of their own, for children who attend their school but are not entitled to free or assisted transport from the Council. Where the numbers travelling are small, car sharing is likely to be the most cost effective option if there is no alternative public transport. Where there are reasonable numbers of children travelling, but not enough to fund the provision of a bus, support could be given to investigate community transport options or the use of school minibuses. Assistance could also be given to investigate whether the cost of providing transport could be reduced by for example, linking it with other existing transport contracts (so that the cost of the vehicle and driver is shared) or by double tripping. In some cases it might be possible to significantly reduce the cost of transport if the arrival / departure time from the school can be adjusted to allow vehicles to be used more efficiently.

## **6. Other home-to-school transport provisions and budgets**

<b>Transport budget</b>	<b>£M</b>	<b>No. students</b>
Home to school	7.07	7,472
SEN	4.4	760
Post-16	1.73	1,745
Denominational	0.4	395

**SEN:** The law states that children with certain educational needs should be resourced appropriately. This may mean they need to attend a school which is not the local one.

**Post-16:** The Council considers it appropriate to give students access to further education to promote an educated workforce in a rural county.

**Denominational:** The law requires consideration/regard to all religions or beliefs such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, humanism and atheism.

**Continuity:** Students who move away from their local school partway through exam courses are assisted with transport to enable them to remain at the same school to complete the course.

**Medical conditions:** Students with temporary and sometimes permanent medical conditions who attend their local school and cannot walk or use a bus can get help to ensure school attendance is maintained. Govt guidance issued with the 2006 Education and Inspections Act consider such pupils to be 'eligible' for the purposes of transport entitlement.



**Shared sites:** Students whose designated schools are in Trowbridge, Chippenham and Salisbury can receive transport to an alternative school where their local school is on the same 'campus'.

**Any other individual circumstances:** The Council has a responsibility to consider any individual circumstances presented for purposes of considering transport entitlement and to determine whether these warrant an exception to normal policy.

**7. Pupils living in isolated areas** *Paragraph 13, Bullet Point 4 in the Cabinet report*

The Cabinet report refers to "Families living in areas where it is not possible to arrange alternative transport..."

In 2010/11 there were 26 pupils living in areas which meant they required transport other than by school/service bus. These were transported mainly by taxi (18) but some were taken by parental car (8) and claimed an allowance towards motor fuel costs. In 2011/12 this number falls to 13 as many of them transfer from primary to secondary or leave compulsory education.

If denominational transport support is removed, all of these children could attend their local school and get there by walking, as this is in the same town or village. Thus, there will be no cost incurred in providing free transport to the local school.

**8. The consultation process** *See Paragraphs 4-7 in the Cabinet report*

Letters were sent to parents of all children currently receiving assistance, headteachers of those schools affected and the RC diocese on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2011, giving notice of the proposal to withdraw assistance at Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> July, inviting comments by 13<sup>th</sup> July.

- A second letter was sent to same groups inviting comments on the proposals and providing details of the Cabinet meeting.
- CE diocese were consulted
- Individual responses were recorded and acknowledged
- Cabinet members met with selected headteachers and the RC diocese on 8<sup>th</sup> August
- Cabinet's consideration of the proposals was postponed from 26<sup>th</sup> July to 13<sup>th</sup> September in order to allow greater participation during term time.
- A report containing the proposals was taken to the Children's Services Select Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> July.

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## **Appendices**

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| Appendix 1    | Modelling of Financial Implications for Secondary Schools Budgets of Changes to Denominational Transport  |
| Appendix 1(a) | Modelling of Financial Implications for Primary Schools Budgets of Changes to Denominational Transport  |
| Appendix 2    | The September updated position regarding numbers on roll in local schools, along with the information relating to the actual numbers of pupils who are accessing denominational transport places required in each year group. |
| Appendix 3    | Report to Cabinet on 5 <sup>th</sup> September 2006 on Denominational Transport (including appendices)  |
| Appendix 4    | Cabinet minute from consideration of the above report on 5 <sup>th</sup> September 2006   |