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# Home to School Transport Policy 2017/18 - Summary Report

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<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Executive on 20 October 2016 Operations Board on 29 September 2016 Corporate Board on 13 September 2016
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Dominic Boeck
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	25 July 2016
<b>Report Author:</b>	Caroline Corcoran
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	EX3108

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## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To review and approve the Home to School Transport Policy for 2017/18 (statutory requirement) following public consultation.

## 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 To approve the Home to School Transport Policy for 2017/18

## 3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** The Policy for 2016/17 underwent substantial change with the objectives of achieving £400k in savings for the mainstream budget. Some elements were for immediate implementation and others were phased in over 4 years. Early indications are that savings have been made, although the target value has not yet been reached. The Policy now contains very little discretionary transport, with a focus on minimising costs whilst meeting our statutory duty.
- 3.2 **Policy:** The Policy underwent significant change for 2016/17 as a result of the budget cuts round. The Policy for 2017/18 contains additional definitions and clarifications, but the entitlement within the Policy is unchanged. One additional area of discretionary transport has been added.
- 3.3 **Personnel:** n/a
- 3.4 **Legal:** The Home to School Transport Policy meets the legislative requirements for the provision of transport. The Policy underwent significant change for 2016/17 as a result of the budget cuts round, and was subject to substantial scrutiny and input from Legal colleagues. The 2017/18 Policy includes additional definitions and clarifications as discussed with Legal.

3.5 **Risk Management:** This is a demand-led budget, and there is always a risk that costs will increase due to more eligible pupils qualifying for transport, under the Council's statutory duty.

3.6 **Property:** n/a

3.7 **Other:** n/a

#### 4. **Other options considered**

4.1 None

## 5. Executive Summary

- 5.1 West Berkshire Council's Home to School Transport Policy sets out the circumstances in which it will provide free transport to children and young people travelling to school or college. It therefore relates to West Berkshire residents of statutory school age (from the term following 5th birthday to the end of Year 11).
- 5.2 Local Authorities are required by law to provide help for some pupils but may also provide help for others on a discretionary basis.
- 5.3 A public consultation took place between 6 June and 20 July 2016. There were 74 responses to the consultation and a Consultation Report is included in the Supporting Information (and this includes verbatim comments).
- 5.4 The focus of the consultation was a new clause adding discretionary transport provision for students coping with exceptional social circumstances or who may be at safeguarding risk, including providing emergency school transport arrangements.
- 5.5 There were 53 responses to the question about the addition of transport provision for students coping with exceptional social circumstances or who may be at safeguarding risk. 42 / 53 responses (79%) agreed with the proposal. There were 6 supportive comments about the new provision. There were no unsupportive comments.
- 5.6 There were 2 comments suggesting minor wording amendments to the Policy. One related to the temporary disability for a family and the other related to the process for withdrawing transport. In both cases, minor wording amendments are suggested.
- 5.7 Despite the changes which are being implemented in the 2016/17 Policy being outside of the matters under consideration in this consultation, a number of respondents have made further representation. There were 16 comments consisting of further representation about changes previously considered by the Council
- (1) The cost of Fare Payer seats and the impact on families
  - (2) The removal of free discretionary transport to the secondary catchment school
  - (3) The cost of buying a Fare Payer seat to the catchment school.
  - (4) Concerns about routes to school
  - (5) A desire that all children should be provided with home to school transport.
- 5.8 These issues have already been carefully considered by the Council through the previous public consultations. These additional representations from the public consultation cannot overturn the Council's decision. Therefore, no changes are recommended but the comments are noted. For reference, verbatim comments are included in the Consultation Document.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Based on the positive response to the proposal to add discretionary provision for students coping with exceptional social circumstances or who may be at safeguarding risk, it is recommended that new provision is approved.

- 6.2 It is recommended that the minor wording amendments are approved:
- (1) The specific family circumstances are carefully considered. [in relation to an Appeal concerning a temporary disability for a parent].
  - (2) Where transport is being withdrawn and the decision has been taken subject to minor remedial works (i.e. cutting back shrubbery, adding signs), the works will be completed before the date transport ends, but the work may be undertaken after notice has been given.

## 7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A - Supporting Information
- 7.2 Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment
- 7.3 Appendix C – Verbatim Comments from the Public Consultation
- 7.4 Appendix D – Home to School Transport Policy 2017/18

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### Corporate Board's recommendation:

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