

## Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Appendix N5b

<b>Budget Proposals 2017/18: Home to School Transport for young people aged over 16 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)</b>		<b>Head of Service: Ian Pearson</b> <b>Author: Jane Seymour</b>	<b>16 February 2017</b> <b>Version 2 (Executive)</b>
<b>Proposal:</b>	To charge parents of post 16 pupils with SEND £703 per annum as a contribution towards transport costs		
<b>Total budget 2016/17:</b>	£301,733	<b>Recommended officer saving 2017/18:</b>	£47,101 (15.6%)
<b>Initial proposed saving 2017/18:</b>	£47,101 (15.6%)	<b>Final recommendation to Executive 2017/18:</b>	To proceed with this proposal
<b>No. of responses:</b>	<p>In total, 43 responses were received. Of those that responded::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 14 identified themselves as users of the service</li> <li>• 26 as residents of West Berkshire</li> <li>• 6 as council employees</li> <li>• 5 as Parish/Town Councils</li> <li>• 1 as service providers</li> <li>• 1 as partner organisations</li> <li>• 9 as other (Unison)</li> </ul>		
<b>Key issues raised:</b>	<p>The majority of responses received from respondents were against the proposal, feeling that the council are targeting a vulnerable and already impoverished section of the community. Families with children who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities are often under financial strain, this may be due to not being able to work full time as they act as carers for their children, or the special needs of their child require expensive alterations to the home or special equipment.</p> <p>However the proposal has been made to allow the council to bring the charge for Post 16 SEND students home to school transport in line with that already in place for Mainstream Post 16 travel.</p> <p>Many respondents felt that the charge should be means tested, or only made on those not receiving income related benefits or were high income families. Also it was felt that the proposal would be harder hitting on those in rural areas. Respondents felt that the families would benefit from time to pay in instalments, or a staged increase.</p> <p>It was believed that the contribution charge would also affect the amount of Post 16 pupils who would no longer have the benefit and access to further education as they would not be able to attend college. This may in the long term impact on social care as the children would be less prepared and unable to pursue the opportunities they have now.</p>		

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<b>Equality issues:</b>	No issues were raised during the consultation, that weren't already included in the EqIA Stage One. A Stage Two has been completed.		
<b>Suggestions for reducing the impact on service users:</b>	<b>Suggestion</b>	<b>Council response</b>	
	Several financially related suggestions including: staggering the amount paid, gradual/phased increase or vary the contribution based on need and distance travelled. Allowance for low income families, means test or exempt those on income related benefits. Continue transport for those having difficulty with making the contribution. Reduce the cost of the contribution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The contribution amount is in line with what is charged to mainstream students for home to school transport.</li> <li>• The proposal allows for exceptional circumstances for Post 16 students to be considered on a case by case basis, with the right to appeal against decisions that are made.</li> <li>• Post 16 students can apply for Bursary funding from schools and colleges, as they receive this from the government to provide for this. The West Berkshire website explains details and how it applies.</li> <li>• The contribution can be paid in instalments.</li> <li>• The proposal does not take transport away, but asks for a contribution.</li> <li>• The contribution is a flat rate for all students irrespective of the distance they travel or their needs.</li> </ul>	
	An additional Bursary scheme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current Bursary scheme is a government funded provision, paid directly to schools; the council has no leverage on this scheme.</li> </ul>	
Provide more education in other establishments closer to student.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The contribution is a flat rate and is irrespective of the distance that the pupil travels to access specialist SEN education and does not follow the government guidelines for distance for 5 to 16 year old students.</li> <li>• With regards to developing provision closer to home; this would always be our starting point as there is nothing to be gained from increased journey times.</li> <li>• We have already developed more 'local' provision e.g. secondary ASD bases and are looking to what other mainstream based resource bases might be established. At the same time, we continue to have an open dialogue with or two special schools and Newbury College about extending specialist opportunities.</li> </ul>		

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	Inform families about ESA and that can be claimed from age 16.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The council would advise all students and families to make their own investigations on the potential of external funding assistance opportunities.</li> </ul>	
	Cut down on other council services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This would be a matter for the Council Members and Parish Councils to decide.</li> </ul>	
	Make parents aware of the full cost of transport.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents of students currently accessing home to school transport were informed by letter of the proposal and the amount that transport costs per student. This information is available on the council's website.</li> </ul>	
Alternative options for applying the saving in this area:	Suggestion	Council response	
	Charge more to those on higher incomes and means test.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The contribution amount is in line with what is charged to mainstream students for home to school transport. Please see response in previous suggestions regarding financial issues.</li> </ul>	
	Introduce the LIFT programme, help schools develop a scheme for travel training or reinstate travel training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although the Travel Training Programme was discontinued, options to provide Travel Training are being explored and findings will be presented for options that would be financially viable.</li> </ul>	
	Look at overheads or cut Councillors wages. Better savings to be made in other areas, reduce bureaucracy, cut down on fraudulent claims, reduce hours on street lighting and stop wastage of council funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This would be a matter for the Council Members and Parish Councils to decide.</li> </ul>	
	Make Personal Transport Budgets available to all out of county student placements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal Transport Budgets are currently being reviewed with the option to offer to more students. These can only be provided where they are cost effective for the council.</li> <li>The Personal Transport Budget however would be reduced by the contribution amount, so parents would still be making this.</li> <li>We are keen to explore these and the Transport Team would welcome all contact from parents regarding these. Information is available on the website.</li> </ul>	

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	More in-house provision, to reduce the more expensive option of taxis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We currently utilise the in-house transport provision whenever practical and cost effective to do so and that integrates efficiently.</li> </ul>	
	Investment in more long term projects or provide lower cost provision options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This would be a matter for the Council Members to decide.</li> <li>The council procures these services through a tender process.</li> </ul>	
	Increase council tax.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This would be a matter for the Council Members and Parish Councils to decide.</li> </ul>	
	Use of young offenders to carry out basic activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This would be a matter for the government to consider.</li> </ul>	
<b>Suggestions for income generation:</b>	<b>Suggestion</b>	<b>Council response</b>	
	Increase Council Tax.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This would be a matter for the Council Members and Parish Councils to decide.</li> </ul>	
	Financial considerations as detailed previously. For example means testing, not charging low income families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The contribution amount is in line with what is charged to mainstream students for home to school transport. Please see response in previous suggestions regarding financial issues.</li> </ul>	
	Better booking system, perhaps online, to allow for services and facilities to be booked.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is currently being reviewed and a solution will be available once all appropriate research and procurement has taken place.</li> </ul>	
	Charge for use of libraries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This would be a matter for the Culture and Environmental Protection service to consider in its proposals to Members.</li> </ul>	
	Adoption of parcels of land by residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This would be a matter for the Council Members and Parish Councils to decide.</li> </ul>	
	A rubbish charge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This would be a matter for the Culture and Environmental Protection service to consider in its proposals to members.</li> </ul>	
	A Friend Scheme, for rural areas to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This could form part of future discussions with Parish Councils in relation to</li> </ul>	

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	maintain and protect.	devolution.	
	Several suggestions of cuts or changes to services, which included reducing printing on planning applications, removal of free bus travel for the wealthy pensioners, internal staffing costs, money management advice and cutting councillor's wages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These are all matters which would need to be considered and reviewed by either Council Members or other service areas within the council.</li> </ul>	
<b>Suggestions for how others may help contribute:</b>	Use of Voluntary organisations, with council providing buses in some circumstances.		
<b>Officer conclusion and recommendation as a result of the responses:</b>	<p>Responses received have highlighted the impacts that we had already anticipated, with most concern for the low income families and the targeting of a group perceived to have been hit by savings quite severally already.</p> <p>The proposal will allow these students to access a bursary fund so that the impact is negated for the low income families, with the main aim being to bring home to school transport provision in line with that for mainstream students and the government's guidelines for Post 16 provision.</p> <p>It is therefore recommended that the council progress with this proposal.</p>		

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