

*County Council Meeting – 14 June 2011*

## **REPORT OF THE CABINET**

**The Cabinet met on 24 May 2011. Members are reminded that all reports have been circulated with the agenda for that meeting.**

**In accordance with the Constitution, Members can ask questions of the appropriate Cabinet Member, seek clarification or make a statement on any of these issues without giving notice.**

**The minutes containing the individual decisions for the 24 May meeting are attached as an Annexe to this report. Cabinet responses to Committee reports are included in or appended to the minutes. If any Member wishes to raise a question or make a statement on any of the matters in the minutes, notice must be given to Democratic Services by 12 noon on the day before the County Council meeting (Monday 13 June 2011).**

**For members of the public all non-confidential reports are available on the web site ([www.surreycc.gov.uk](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk)) or on request from Democratic Services.**

### **1. STATEMENTS/UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS**

None received.

### **2. REPORTS FOR INFORMATION / DISCUSSION**

*24 May 2011*

#### **A SUPERFAST BROADBAND PROJECT**

1. At its meeting on 24 May 2011, the Cabinet considered a report about the Superfast Broadband Project. Approval was requested to meet the up front revenue cost of this capital project from the New Homes Bonus Scheme Grant subject to appropriate capitalisation at a later date on delivery of the superfast broadband infrastructure.
2. Cabinet was advised that some parts of Surrey, largely rural areas, lacked access to consistently fast broadband and without public sector intervention this situation was unlikely to change. As a result, some residents, businesses and public sector organisations suffered from lack of access to high quality Internet services leading to a significant risk that sustainable business growth and development may be constrained.
3. As outlined in the Surrey Partnership Plan, the Surrey Strategic Partnership (SSP) has committed to ensuring that access to superfast broadband was available to all business and residential premises in Surrey by the end of 2013. In December 2010 the SSP Leadership Group agreed that the telecommunications industry should be approached to explore possible solutions to achieving this ambitious project. This is a market intervention project and Surrey County Council is leading the procurement process on

behalf of SSP and is making resources available to help achieve this ambition.

**4. Therefore, the Cabinet has agreed:**

- (1) That the revenue cost of the project be funded from the New Homes Bonus Scheme Grant subject to possible capitalisation at a later date on delivery of the superfast broadband infrastructure.
- (2) That officers commence the process for notification to the EC of the grounds for intervention under the State aid guidelines and at the same time undertake a tender process for the infrastructure capability to be constructed to allow access to superfast broadband in those areas of Surrey not due to be provisioned by the market in the foreseeable future.

**B HOME TO SCHOOL / COLLEGE TRANSPORT POLICIES INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF TRANSPORT TO DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS**

1. The Cabinet at its meeting on 24 May 2011 considered the proposed changes to the home to School and Post 16 Transport Policies. The report covered three matters / issues:
  - Provision of free denominational transport
  - Concessionary seats for mainstream pupils
  - Post 16 Transport Entitlement
2. The law relating to school transport can be summarised as giving the County Council:
  - A statutory duty to provide free home to school transport to eligible children (Section 508B of the Education Act 1996)
  - A discretion to provide transport (free or otherwise) to any other children (Section 508C of the Education Act 1996)
3. All other aspects of school transport are discretionary. However Local Authorities must also have regard to other guidance, and in particular the Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance (2007) and 2010 Post 16 Transport Guidance (March 2010).
4. The overall annual expenditure on Home to School/College Transport is approximately £10.6m with approximately £10m of this being spent on home to school transport for children in Reception to Year 11 and £600,000 being spent on Post-16 travel.

**Denominational Transport**

5. Pupils who are aged 11 to 16 and who are in receipt of free school meals or whose family receives the maximum level of Working Tax credit and who attend a school on the grounds of their religion or belief which is between 2 and 15 miles from their home are eligible, by law, to receive free transport to school. However in Surrey, other pupils also receive free transport on a discretionary

basis if they attend their nearest denominational school on religious grounds if that school is up to six miles away for a primary school or 10 miles away for a secondary school. Parents who choose a non-faith school as an alternative to their nearest school do not have the same entitlement as those applying on denominational grounds and they have to make and pay for their own arrangements.

6. Between 14 February 2011 and 8 April 2011 the County Council consulted on a proposal to withdraw this discretionary element of free denominational transport for new applicants from September 2012.
7. The reasons for the proposed change are to identify savings in an area of discretionary expenditure and to ensure that all children would be treated equally under the Home to School transport policy, regardless of their religion or belief. Surrey County Council is not alone in having to identify savings and other neighbouring Local Authorities are also considering cutting expenditure in this area, if they have not already done so.
8. Whilst withdrawing free denominational transport may have an impact on admissions to some schools, on balance it is likely that the number of parents that would change their preferences both against and in favour of each school would not have a serious impact on oversubscription.
9. The Cabinet Member for Children and Learning had received comments from the Environment and Transport Select Committee concerning climate change / environment implications. A report from the Education Select Committee was also tabled at the meeting and the Cabinet Member confirmed that equalities issues had been fully considered and that any impact that these decisions would have on school admission patterns would be closely monitored.

### **Concessionary seats for mainstream pupils**

10. When there is a spare seat on an existing contracted vehicle that has been provided for children who are eligible for free transport, the Transport Coordination Centre (TCC) sells this seat to a parent of a child who is not otherwise entitled to free transport. Concessionary seats are limited and if an entitled child needs that seat in the future a child may have their seat withdrawn at short notice.
11. The price of a concessionary seat for mainstream pupils is currently £1.03 per day (£65 per term/£195 pa) for a child under 8 years old and £1.74 per day (£110 per term/£330 pa) for a child aged 8 years and over. However there are discounts of 50% for children who have an older sibling travelling on the vehicle.
12. Since last year's review of Local Bus School Special services, it has been confirmed by a Cabinet Member for Transport Decision that the average daily fare to be charged on the remaining School Specials would be £2.10 for 2011/12.
13. Currently concessionary seats are sold on a journey basis. However this makes forecasting of uptake and income difficult to assess as demand will vary throughout the year and is onerous on officer time. It is therefore proposed to

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require parents who wish to take up a concessionary seat to purchase a seat on a half-termly basis.

### **Post 16 Transport entitlement**

14. Following the Government's announcement that the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) scheme is being closed to new applicants, Surrey County Council has had to review its Home to School/College travel policy for post-16 students. Previously, travel eligibility was based on whether or not a student was in receipt of the maximum EMA.

### **15. Cabinet has agreed:**

- (1) That the withdrawal of free home to school denominational transport for new pupils from September 2012 be approved but that schools which wish to introduce their own arrangements at full cost recovery be supported.
- (2) That an increase in the fare for a concessionary seat to £2.10 in 2011/12 and £2.50 in 2012/13 be approved and thereafter to increase in line with inflation (the lower of CPI and RPI).
- (3) That the discounts for siblings and younger children in the concessionary fare scheme be removed.
- (4) That a change in policy be approved so that concessionary seats are sold on a half-termly basis.
- (5) That the changes to the eligibility criteria for Post 16 School/College travel be approved.

3 June 2011

Dr Andrew Povey  
*Chairman*