

SCHOOL TRANSPORT EXCEPTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

**MOLE VALLEY LOCAL COMMITTEE,
22 May 2002**

KEY ISSUE:

The proposed termination of exceptional provision of school transport from September 2003 for all new pupils.

SUMMARY:

Surrey's Transport policy provides free home to school transport for those pupils who are attending their nearest school and for whom the distance from the home address to the school is 3 miles (4.83km) or more for 8 to 16 year olds. The qualifying distance reduces to 2 miles (3.22km) for children in the 5 to 8 age range.

In addition, traditionally, for many years children living in certain areas have been receiving free transport to some schools even though these schools are not their nearest. These have occurred as the result of school closures, supporting under-subscribed schools, and because of historical links with certain areas. In many cases these anomalies were not time-limited.

On 11 February 2002 the Executive of the Council agreed to consult widely with schools, parents and other groups in order to ascertain views about ceasing the transport exceptional arrangements from September 2003 and beyond for all new pupils. The Local Committee is invited to submit comments on the proposals as part of the ongoing consultation.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is RECOMMENDED that the Committee considers a joint response to the proposal

INTRODUCTION

1. Surrey's Transport policy provides free home to school transport for those pupils who are attending their nearest school and for whom the distance from the home address to the school is 3 miles (4.83km) or more for 8 to 16 year olds. The qualifying distance reduces to 2 miles (3.22km) for children in the 5 to 8 age range.
2. In addition, traditionally, for many years children living in certain areas have been receiving free transport to some schools even though these schools are not their nearest. These have occurred as the result of school closures, supporting under-subscribed schools, and because of historical links with certain areas. In many cases these anomalies were not time-limited.
3. Since July 1995 the Authority has been reviewing such arrangements (Transport Anomalies) with a view to ceasing them over a period of time. The last Transport Anomalies to cease were agreed to take effect from September 1998 as the result of the Fundamental Review and these realised considerable savings in cost.
4. Currently there are still 31 known existing anomalies: (Appendix I)
5. These current anomalies create issues concerning equity for all parents, pupils and schools alike. There is a need for a fair policy for all, so those currently advantaged by these existing anomalies do not have a wider 'choice' of school whereby their children can get free Home to School Transport to 2 schools, one of which is not their nearest when the majority of Surrey pupils can only receive transport to one school as long as it is their nearest and it is over the qualifying distance.
6. Parents not in receipt of the transport anomaly but living very close to other parents and pupils who are, feel severely disadvantaged and, understandably, complain and challenge.
7. If free transport was removed for these anomalies, parents may still go to the original school of their choice / preference but may use the car instead, perhaps creating environmental issues in relation to more congestion on the roads at peak hours. However, it is proposed to offer concessionary seats as far as possible on any existing school coach serving the areas and to advise parents of Public Transport routes (bus or trains) to give them the choice of using Public Transport rather than their own private vehicles.
8. At it's informal meeting on 11 February 2002, the Executive of Surrey County Council considered a proposal that, in the best interests of treating all parents, pupils and schools equally and establishing equity for all people in Surrey:
 - Consultations be undertaken on the proposal that the existing anomalies will cease from September 2003, for any new pupils being admitted into schools which are not their nearest.

- Transport anomalies for all existing pupils already in the schools continue until such time as they leave the schools.
 - Any new pupils disadvantaged by the cessation of these anomalies should, as far as possible, be offered concessionary seats on existing school contract coaches or advised of alternative Public Transport routes to ensure that parents have an alternative to using their own private vehicles for home to school transport runs.
 - The Council in its role as a highways and transport authority should offer help with travel plans for any schools affected by the cessation of these anomalies, to ensure that as far as is possible that there are safe walking and cycling routes or Public Service Transport routes.
 - If any further transport anomalies come to light in the future, to consult immediately with regard to their cessation.
 - If in the future there is a need to create to further transport anomalies (i.e. because a school closes) that they be time limited.
9. The Executive agreed that the consultation should go ahead and letters have been sent to parents, Members and head teachers inviting their comments by 14 June. The text of the letter sent to parents, together with a list of those schools currently affected by the existing transport exceptional arrangements is attached as Appendix 1.

10. **RECOMMENDATION**

It is RECOMMENDED that the Committee considers a joint response to the proposal

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:
