

CHILDREN & EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

At its meeting on Thursday 27 March 2014 the Children and Education Select Committee considered the outcome of the consultation on Surrey's Home to School Transport policy.

The Committee paid particular attention to the following two areas:

- Whether Surrey's policy should be extended to provide for children to receive free home to school transport to attend the same school as a sibling where the sibling has already been assessed as entitled to free home to school transport.
- Whether Surrey's policy should be extended to provide free home to school transport for a Surrey child to attend their nearest geographical Surrey school if their nearest school is out of County and the distance or safety of route to that school would mean that transport would still need to be provided.

The Committee was informed that the additional cost to the Council of providing free home to school transport to siblings was difficult to determine mainly for two reasons, the cost of transport being variable according to need and circumstance and the impact a change in policy could have on the initial decisions made by families when applying for schools.

With regards to providing transport so that a child could attend a Surrey school rather than an out of County school, it is again the case that any change in policy could influence decisions made by families when applying for school places, although the number of such families is expected to be relatively small.

The Committee queried whether there currently existed unclaimed eligibility for home to school transport. Officers clarified that eligibility was automatically assessed through the schools admissions process, although this was not possible when eligibility was linked to income. However, a trial scheme was being undertaken where information regarding students eligible for free school meals in junior and primary schools was used to identify those potentially eligible for transport when beginning secondary education.

The Committee recognises that there is a need to consider all the implications in any change of policy, including cost and the need to ensure change is fair and equitable. It was highlighted the consultation had drawn a limited number of respondents in spite of it being widely advertised, which would suggest many residents are satisfied with the present policy.

Having discussed the benefits and disadvantages of updating the Home to School Transport policy, the Committee agreed to recommend to the Cabinet:

That Surrey's Home to School Transport Policy be extended to:

- I. Provide for a child to receive concessionary home to school transport, or free home to school transport if from a low income family, to attend the same school as a sibling where the sibling has already been assessed as entitled to free home to school transport and where the child is eligible for a place at the same school.

- II. Provide free home to school transport for a child to attend their nearest geographical Surrey school if their nearest school is out of county and the distance or safety of route to that school would mean that transport would still need to be provided.

Dr Zully Grant-Duff
Chairman of the Children and Education Select Committee
27 March 2014