

CABINET RESPONSE TO CHILDREN AND EDUCATION SELECT COMMITTEE**HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY
(considered by C&ESC on 27 March 2014)****SELECT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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

- (1) 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.
- (2) 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.

RESPONSE:

Officers have considered the recommendations made by Children and Education Select Committee.

However, on consideration of the issues, the implications of the first recommendation are considered to be too complex and resource heavy to implement and this has therefore not been recommended to Cabinet. The reasons for coming to this conclusion are set out in paragraphs 99 to 114 of the covering report to Cabinet and can be summarised as follows:

- It would potentially lead to some children receiving home to school transport even though they might live less than the statutory walking distance to the school
- It could not apply to children whose older sibling was assessed as being entitled to transport on faith grounds to a denominational school, because this element of discretionary entitlement was withdrawn for new applicants from 2012
- It would add a further layer of complexity which would not be helpful and would be confusing and resource heavy to apply
- Surrey would be committed to paying transport for siblings to attend the same school, even once the older child had left
- If a concessionary charge was to be levied for some applicants, this would require additional resource for assessing eligibility and for recording, invoicing and collecting the revenue
- The costs for a seat on a school coach, a seat in a taxi, a bus pass and a train pass differ but it would be inequitable to charge different concessionary rates based on the mode of travel. This would leave Surrey having to subsidise the cost for siblings who travel by bus, school coach and taxi
- There may be contractual issues on levying a charge against bus and rail passes where Surrey has negotiated rates with passenger transport companies for statutory pupils only
- Differences in the charging and refund mechanisms for bus and rail passes and concessionary seats on school coaches and taxis have the potential for creating a two tier system
- The local authority has no statutory duty to provide transport for siblings

- It might pave the way for other elements of discretionary expenditure to be requested
- There is already provision within the policy for exceptional circumstances to be considered

In contrast, the second recommendation appears to represent a reasonable change to policy as it would support those parents who would prefer to attend their nearest Surrey school ahead of a nearer out of County school where transport would otherwise need to be provided, as well as helping Surrey schools to attract applications from Surrey parents. This recommendation has therefore been put forward for consideration by Cabinet.

Linda Kemeny
Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning
22 April 2014