

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Assistant Director Children's Services

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	25 February 2011
Subject:	Proposed Changes to the Provision of Home to School/College Transport for Post 16 Students

Summary:

In the light of significant savings that Lincolnshire County Council and all authorities have to make over the next four years, the Council has concluded that certain elements of its discretionary post 16 home to school/college transport policy need to be changed to ensure its longer term sustainability and for a more consistent offering to be made.

The Council believes that it can make a saving of over £1 million during the financial year 2011/12, for 5-18 transport reducing the current transport budget from £29,713,830 to £28,691,070. This represents, however, a 3.44% saving only on a budget that comprises 34% of the Children's Services' total core budget (excluding grants and the dedicated schools budget).

The Council is seeking to make operational efficiency savings across the whole transport budget but, although these are significant, they will not on their own yield sufficient savings to be able to avoid spending less than at present on the discretionary elements of the transport policy.

The proposed changes to the post 16 policy are expected to make part year savings of £461,500 in 2011/12, with full year savings of £1,075,000 in 2012/13. The latter comprises £791,100 additional income from post 16 charging, an estimated £280,000 from the proposed changes to the designated transport areas (DTAs) and an estimated £3,650 from the removal of unsuitable routes transport provision. No savings will be achieved in 2011/12 for the proposed changes to the DTAs because the changes are being phased.

A charge of £390 per annum still represents only 40% of the actual cost of making transport provision for post 16 students attending colleges and sixth forms.

Lincolnshire remains comparatively low in its post 16 concessionary charges compared to other Local Authorities. Our nearest neighbour, Norfolk, in 2010/11 charged £354 pa and the average for all rural Authorities is £327 pa. We expect all Authorities to increase charges for 2011/12.

The changes to the designated transport areas further aim to provide a more

equitable offer. Currently (due to postcode) some pupils have access to travel to up to three colleges whereas others can only access one FE college. The proposals will enable a more consistent and fair offer to pupils in Lincolnshire.

Actions Required:

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the proposed changes to the provision of home to school/college transport for post 16 students as set out in the consultation document, Appendix A.

1. Background

Children's Services have been very successful in achieving efficiencies in home to school transport. A fundamental budget review in 2007-08 has yielded significant efficiencies and this drive for true efficiencies will continue. However, the savings required from a budget comprising 34% of the Children's Services total core budget cannot be met through operational efficiencies alone. There is no statutory requirement for the local authority to provide transport for post 16 learners and it is, therefore, within this area of discretionary provision that changes to the existing policy are proposed to achieve savings.

2. Conclusion

The proposals are designed to make savings and provide fairer and more equitable transport provision while at the same time continuing a high level of support for post 16 students by funding *circa* 60% of the total post 16 transport costs.

3. Consultation

A full consultation commenced on 5 January 2011 and closes on 16 March 2011. The consultation has been made available at:
www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/proposedpolicychanges

In addition, a paper copy of the proposals and a response form can be obtained from the Customer Service Centre (tel: 01522 782030). Posters advertising the consultation have been widely circulated and, in addition to the questionnaire, three public consultation meetings have been arranged as well as separate meetings with head teachers of schools and college principals. Responses will be considered by the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on 8 April 2011. Final proposals will be submitted to the Executive on 3 May 2011 which, if agreed, will be implemented on 1 September 2011.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

Although the proposals will have an impact on the access of students to schools and colleges other than the ones nearest to their place of residence, there will be greater equity with respect to access to further education.

The higher cost of transport for post 16 students may affect the recruitment and

retention of post 16 learners.

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix 1	Consultation document: Proposed changes to the provision of home to school/college transport for post 16 students.

5. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Transport policy statement for learners aged 16-18 in further education (schools, colleges and centres offering courses funded by the YPLA) and for continuing learners aged 19 and over	http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/parents/schools/school-transport/post-16education-transport-policy/54393.article
2010 Post-16 Transport Guidance	DFE Publication Ref: LSC-P-NAT-100520

This report was written by Dick Pike, who can be contacted on 01522 553232 or dick.pike@lincolnshire.gov.uk.