

EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR DECISION

23-27 APRIL 2018

REPORT: POST 16 TRANSPORT POLICY STATEMENT 2018-19

SCRUTINY OPINION FROM THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 20 APRIL 2018

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee met on 20 April 2018 and considered a report concerning the post 16 transport policy statement 2018-19.

The Committee supported the recommendations contained in the report.

In addition, the following comments were made:

- It was queried whether parents and carers could get funding from schools and colleges if they could not afford to pay the £570 charge. It was confirmed that sixth form schools and colleges receive bursary funding from government and up to three quarters of this funding was being spent on transport by some colleges. It was at the discretion of sixth form schools and colleges as to how they used their bursary funding but it had to be spent on the students.
- It was questioned whether parents and carers could spread their payments further over several months by direct debit. Officers reported that this was being looked into but unfortunately the current IT systems hindered this as they cannot handle receiving payments that way. It was confirmed that looking into arrangements for monthly direct debit payments was a priority. The Committee strongly supported officers investigating further the possibility of monthly payments by parents and carers.
- It was queried whether the charge could be waived or lower payments could be made by means testing parents. It was highlighted that this would require a policy change and an unintended consequence of this would be higher administration costs.
- It was suggested whether there could be a discount for siblings to help reduce the costs for parents and carers with more than one child in post 16 education, or whether sixth form schools and colleges could use some of the bursary funding to help families. Officers confirmed that, although this would incur an administration charge, they had looked at a sibling discount but this could not be done on the current IT system. It was noted that officers were looking at different IT systems currently and this could be explored as part of the process. This would also require a policy change. Officers reported that they would raise the possibility of using bursary funding for siblings with sixth form schools and colleges.
- Concerns were raised that this policy provided choice of location rather than choice of courses. As a result, some students, such as those in the Louth area, would not be able to do the courses they wanted to do. It was queried how much it would cost to provide choice of courses rather than location. It

was highlighted that the policy was changed in 2010 to provide transport to the nearest sixth form school or college, rather than to the nearest course provided. Officers confirmed that it would cost approximately an additional £1.5M to fund a choice of courses in further distant establishments. This figure is derived from the savings achieved from the changes made to the policy to remove this provision 7 years ago. Re-establishing this entitlement could lead to a larger uptake of the Council's transport offer and could lead to further costs in excess of £1.5M.

- Concerns were raised about the vulnerability of commercial transport providers and it was queried what the Council could do to ensure their viability. It was reported that the Council worked with all transport providers especially in areas where no one else would provide a service. However, the Council had terminated some contracts in the past due to the extortionate amounts asked for to run them. It was highlighted that while the Council wanted the providers to be successful, it still needed value for money from the contracts as well. Officers were investigating what could be done to support providers.