



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMISSION 6 November 2007

Report of the Corporate Director for Children and Young People

# ITEM 9

## School Transport Consultation

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To note the revised proposals in the latest consultation exercise.
- 1.2 To comment on the revised proposals as part of the consultation.

### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 This report presents details of the consultation exercise currently underway regarding proposed charges for home to school transport, to take effect from September, 2008.
- 2.2 The report shows how the City Council has attempted to respond to concerns raised during the previous consultation exercise carried out in the spring of 2007.
- 2.3 The City Council has to make budget savings over the next 3 years to address a number of significant new pressures. As part of these savings, the Council consulted earlier in the year on proposals to change the charging policy for transport to faith schools and to increase all other home to school transport charges.
- 2.4 A number of general concerns emerged from respondents to the previous consultation:
  - The cost for each pupil was considered too high, ranging from £350 to £500 for faith pupils and £320 to £420 for other discretionary non-faith pupils.
  - The maximum charge for each household was considered to be set at too high a level (capped at £1000) and unaffordable for larger households.
  - There were not enough opportunities to pay the advance charges (a maximum of 2 payment options was previously proposed).

- 2.5 In response to these concerns, set against the continued need to make savings in light of the financial situation facing the Council, the amended proposals currently being consulted on are:
- to introduce standard fares of £290 each year for primary age pupils and £350 each year for secondary age pupils who either:
    - live within walking distance of their nearest suitable school or
    - who attend a faith school which is not their nearest suitable school
  - to introduce larger discounts for households with more than one child up to age 16 travelling to school. Discounts to be 10% of the full charge for the second child, 20% for the third child and any additional children, within a maximum charge for each household of £850 each year.
  - to increase the number of payments options as follows:
    - a) one payment, by cash, cheque or postal order in July
    - b) two payments, one in July and one in February, by cash, cheque or postal order
    - c) one payment by cheque in July, followed by seven monthly direct debit payments between September and March.
  - for faith pupils, to apply charges only for those starting at a faith school from September, 2008. Other discretionary charges will apply to all pupils from that date.

- 2.6 Although the proposed new advance charges for discretionary home to school transport will not cover the full cost of providing the transport, they still offer a number of advantages, including:

- the bus network will be maintained and pupils will still be able to travel safely and directly to school
- the introduction of a 'fare for all' will avoid the complexity of calculating different fares on different routes
- advance charging will provide more certainty of obtaining fares for travel
- some limited financial savings will be achieved which will help to protect other council services.

There are also disadvantages:

- parents may choose to take their children to school by car, rather than paying, thereby having a negative impact upon congestion
- the financial impact for families who will have to pay (more) for their child's transport from September 2008.

## 2.7 Consultation

The Council is currently consulting with the following:

- Parents of all pupils attending schools in Derby.
- Parents of children who live in Derby but who attend faith schools outside the city.
- Governors and headteachers of all Derby schools and neighbouring faith schools.
- The diocesan education authority for Derby
- Neighbouring local authorities
- The confederation of Passenger Transport

2.8 The closing date for responses is 3 December 2007. Careful consideration will be given to all responses, alongside those already received from the initial consultation exercise in March/April, before a final report is presented to the Cabinet on 15 January 2008.

**For more information  
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Report to Cabinet 31 July 2007

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**Background papers:**

**List of appendices:**

Appendix 1 - implications

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
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**Financial**

- 1.1 The Council currently spends around £378,000, or £645 per child every year to transport pupils free of charge to faith schools on supported school bus services.
- 1.2 In addition, around £450,000, or £475 per child is spent every year providing subsidised school transport for pupils up to age 16 who attend their nearest suitable or faith school, but who live within walking distance of that school.
- 1.3 Set against these costs, the proposals are estimated to generate income of approximately £20,000 in the 2008/9 financial year.

**Legal**

- 2.1 There are no direct legal implications for these proposals as they relate to discretionary transport.

**Personnel**

- 3.1 None.

**Equalities impact**

- 4.1 The current policy benefits pupils attending faith schools as free transport is not available to those who wish to attend schools for other reasons, such as their specialism.
- 4.2 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 increases entitlement to free transport for pupils whose families claim income support or the maximum working tax credit. However, those on low incomes just above the threshold may find difficulty in affording increased or new charges.

**Corporate Priorities**

- 5.1 One of the Council's priorities for 2007-10 is to "give you excellent service and value for money." The income generated by this proposal enables other services to children, young people and the public to be maintained and developed.