

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting14th July 2016

1. Title of Item/Report

Home to School Transport Policy

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that provided details of the consultation response received. On 19th May 2016 Cabinet approved a recommendation to consult on a revised, draft 'Home to School Transport Policy' with a requirement to follow the statutory guidance on the consultation period of 28 days. The Council's legal advisor was satisfied that this statutory requirement had been met. The report detailed the responses and outcomes of the consultation that took place between 20th May and 5th July 2016.

Members were provided with details of the consultation methodology, consultation question responses. The 4 key themes that come out of the consultation were:-

- Discrimination
- Potential increased costs
- Disruption to family arrangements
- Confusions over definitions and process

Some of the responses included a request for flexibility from the Council where children were transported on the basis of distance or safe walking route and where there was parental preference for a faith school. In such instances, respondents had requested that the Council, where transport costs would not be more than zone or nearest suitable school, should take into account parental preference. If the decision was taken to adopt the draft policy from September 2017, a clause to this effect could be included.

Members of the public were also in attendance at the meeting including parents and school and diocesan representatives who wished to object to the Policy change. Those who wished to speak were given the opportunity to address the Members. Comments were made that matched the 4 key themes.

Responses to the 4 key themes were detailed and provided for Members.

Further comments by members of the public could be summarised as follows:-

- A suitable school for a catholic family should be a catholic school.
- St Joseph's RC Primary, St Michaels RC Academy and catholic families from Norton had strong links going back many decades.
- The amount of money that would be saved was questioned.

In response Cabinet noted that:-

- Budget estimates could fluctuate year on year therefore the estimate was only an estimate.
- The decision to consider the draft policy was not taken lightly and cuts from Government meant difficult decisions had to be made to ensure that the most vulnerable could be protected.
- Stockton was 1 of only 2 authorities within the North East that hadn't already made the policy change in relation to faith school transport.
- Other schools had made Transport provision for students from communities to access their schools.

Cabinet was provided with details of the proposed appeals procedure.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The draft policy be formally adopted as the 'Home to School Transport Policy' of the Council from September 2017.
2. The Council, where transport costs would not be more than zone or nearest suitable school, take into account parental preference.
3. The appeals procedure set out in the Statutory Guidance be publicised and implemented from September 2016 be agreed.

3. Reasons for the Decision

The review of the Home to School Transport Policy had taken place in line with the statutory guidance for local authorities and now the Council had met the statutory expectation as included in the guidance of a consultation period of 28 working days, the evidence from the consultation was presented to Cabinet for consideration and a decision as to whether the policy should be adopted as that of the Council from 2017. The guidance on appeals had changed to ensure greater consistency in approach and to be clearer and more transparent for both parents and local authorities. The recommendation to adopt an appeals procedure in line with that recommended in statutory guidance from

September 2016 reflects the importance of this proposal.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight, 25th July 2016

Proper Officer
19 July 2016