

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

2 AUGUST 2007

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION/KEY DECISION

Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Cllr Cunningham

SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL TRAVEL STRATEGY 2008

1. Summary

Current school transport legislation was framed in 1944, and provides a guarantee of home to school transport for only a small minority of pupils – those of compulsory school age attending their nearest suitable school where this is beyond ‘statutory walking distance’.

Evidence shows that a lack of transport and the cost of transport can both act as a barrier to choice. The result is that there is a real inequity in how far children are able to travel to school. More affluent children travel on average nearly half a mile further than the poorest, with only 10% of children entitled to free school meals travelling 3 or more miles to school compared to 18% of children not entitled to free school meals. The government was to remove the lack of affordable transport as a barrier to choice.

The Education & Inspections Act 2006 extends Local Authority (LA) duties and powers relating to home to school transport by extending entitlement to free home to school transport for low income families and by place a general duty on LAs to assess the travel and transport needs of all pupils, and promote sustainable travel to school. Each LA has to produce a Sustainable School Travel Strategy by August 2007 so that it is available for parents to view when they are considering submitting applications for their children to start at primary or secondary schools in 2008.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to :-

1. agree the Sustainable School Travel Strategy 2008, which is attached to this report.
2. refer the Strategy to Executive Scrutiny for consideration and possible inclusion in a Select Committee's work programme.'

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

Section 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a general duty on Local Authorities (LAs) to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport and produce a Sustainable School Travel Strategy annually.

4. Members Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct

(paragraph 8) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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Evidence shows that a lack of transport and the cost of transport can both act as a barrier to choice. The result is that there is a real inequity in how far children are able to travel to school. More affluent children travel on average nearly half a mile further than the poorest, with only 10% of children entitled to free school meals travelling 3 or more miles to school compared to 18% of children not entitled to free school meals. The government aim to remove the lack of affordable transport as a barrier to choice.

The Education & Inspections Act 2006 extends LA duties and powers relating to home to school transport by extending entitlement to free home to school transport for low income families and by place a general duty on LAs to assess the travel and transport needs of all pupils, and promote sustainable travel to school. Each LA has to produce a Sustainable School Travel Strategy by August 2007 so that it is available for parents to view when they are considering submitting applications for their children to start at primary or secondary schools in 2008

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to :-

1. agree the Sustainable School Travel Strategy 2008, which is attached to this report.
2. refer the Strategy to Executive Scrutiny for consideration and possible inclusion in a Select Committee's work programme.'

3. DETAIL

- 3.1 Section 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a general duty on Local Authorities (LAs) to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport and produce a Sustainable School Travel Strategy annually.

There are 4 main elements to the duty, each of which is explained in more detail below:

- an assessment of the travel and transport needs of children, and young people within the LAs area;
- an audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority that may be used when travelling to and from, or between schools/institutions;

- a strategy to develop the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are better catered for; and
- the promotion of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from, and between schools and other institutions.

3.2 The Act defines sustainable modes of travel as those that the LA considers may improve the physical well-being of those who use them, the environmental well-being of all or part of the LAs area, or a combination of the two. For example, walking and cycling are likely to improve the health of those travelling on foot or by bicycle, and may well bring environmental benefits from reduced levels of congestion and pollution. Similarly, bus use or car sharing might be considered to bring environmental benefits in comparison to individuals travelling by car.

Attached is a copy of the Sustainable School Travel Strategy. The information within the Strategy document has been drawn from existing plans within Children Education and Social Care (CESC) and Development and Neighbourhood Services (DNS), the Local Transport Plan and policies already approved by Cabinet. Appendix 1 includes an Action Plan, which will need to be developed further to include targets for the next 4 years.

The LA is required to publish the Sustainable School Travel Strategy alongside other policies in respect of home to school transport and special needs transport so that they are available when parents are apply for secondary school places for their children by August 2007 and each subsequent year.

4. FUNDING

The DCSF has provided funding through the Standards Fund Grant No. 31/601 – General Duty to Promote Sustainable Travel. This LA has been awarded £14,667 to undertake this work in 2007/08 and the same amount will be provided each year up to and including 2011/12.

It is proposed to commission this work to the Road Safety Team within DNS. The team already manage the School Travel Plan data and will enable the funding to be used effectively in order to drive the Action Plan for the LA forward.

5. CONSULTATION

Due to the short period of time allowed for the LA to put a Strategy in place, a short consultation has been undertaken with school governing bodies. The document has also been displayed on the Stockton on Tees website inviting comments. No objections have been received with regard to the contents of the items within the report.

5. CONCLUSION

The strategy will drive forward the authority's overall vision, objectives and work programme for improving accessibility to schools. The Sustainable School Travel Strategy should build on, and be developed in the context of the authority's community strategies and LTP – including its accessibility plan and bus strategy.

The Sustainable School Travel Strategy has been put together on current information available within the LA to meet the requirements of the new legislation as it has to be in place before the end of August 2007. The Strategy needs to be made available alongside the Home to School Transport Policy when parents are applying for school places for their children.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

Funding has been provided for the next five years for the LA through grant allocation to undertake the necessary work.

Legal

Guidance has been issued to LAs which is covered by statutory duties under sections 508A and 508D of the Education Act 1996. It deals with sections 508A, 508B, 509AS and Schedule 35B of the Education Act 1996 which were inserted by Part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The Sustainable School Travel Strategy takes account of the duties and of the associated regulations. The consultation and information within this report complies with the relevant legal requirements.

RISK ASSESSMENT

A risk assessment has been carried out and this proposal is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Environment

Reduction in car journeys on the school run which will have a positive impact on air quality

Community Safety and Well-Being

Reduction in congestion within the vicinity of the school buildings

Health

To encourage walking and cycling and enable children to become confident travellers.

Economic Regeneration

No significant impact

Education and Lifelong Learning

This is a statutory requirement and is essential information for parents to assist them in their decision-making regarding their preferred school. It is also essential to the organisation and planning for entry to reception and the smooth transition from primary to secondary school.

Arts and Culture

No significant impact

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

None

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<u>Environmental Implications</u>	None
<u>Community Safety Implications</u>	None
<u>Background Papers</u>	None
<u>Education Related Item?</u>	Yes
<u>Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:</u>	Not Ward specific
<u>Property Implications</u>	None