
Report To:	Education and Communities Committee	Date:	06 September 2016
Report By:	Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/47/16/WB
Contact Officer:	Wilma Bain	Contact No:	01475 712748
Subject:	School Transport Review – Proposals for Formal Consultation		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the Education and Communities Committee of a proposed programme for statutory consultation on increasing the mileage limits for free school mainstream transport which will apply to all schools across Inverclyde.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 On 8 September 2015, the Education and Communities Committee considered 4 options which would increase the qualification of entitlement to free school mainstream transport to bring it in line with statutory requirement as outlined in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, and ensure equality in the provision of free school transport within Inverclyde.
- 2.2 At their meeting on 08 September 2015, members of the Education and Communities Committee decided that a full formal consultation exercise be undertaken based on the preferred option of changing to 2.5 and 1.5 miles for secondary and primary schools respectively and including a poverty element to support pupils entitled to free school meals at 1.5/1 miles (option 3) with a proposed implementation date of August 2017.
- 2.3 The proposed changes to school transport provision were included in the Council's proposed budget savings for 2017/18 and were included in the package of savings proposals which were subject to public consultation in November/December 2015.
- 2.4 Under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, if a local authority proposes to discontinue arrangements for the provision of transport for pupils attending a denominational school, it must undertake a statutory consultation with key stakeholders affected by the proposal. Inverclyde Council will undertake a consultation exercise in respect of all mainstream primary and secondary schools in this instance.
- 2.5 This report outlines a proposed programme of activities and associated timeline which will ensure that we are meeting our legislative requirements for consulting on the proposed changes to the current School Transport (Mainstream) Policy as outlined in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that members of the Education and Communities Committee approve the proposed programme and associated timescale relating to the undertaking of a statutory consultation on proposed changes to the current provision of mainstream school transport.

Wilma Bain
Corporate Director
Education Communities & Organisational Development

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Inverclyde Council currently operates an enhanced school transport policy. Secondary school pupils in Inverclyde who live more than 2 miles from their local catchment school receive free transport and primary school pupils who live more than 1 mile from their local catchment school receive free transport ("2/1" model). This exceeds the provision by many Scottish local authorities and lies well within the statutory requirements of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 for secondary and primary school pupils of 3 miles and 2 miles, respectively ("3/2" model).
- 4.2 In Scotland, 19 Councils provide free school transport at the statutory limits ("3/2") and more recently both Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire Councils have moved to statutory limits.
- 4.3 In the current financial climate where the Council is facing severe financial constraints, it was deemed appropriate to review our school transport provision as part of Education Services contribution to the Council's required budget savings proposals. In addition, the review of school transport would address the inequality of provision that currently exists due to historic factors resulting in an enhanced provision for pupils in St Columba's High School, Clydeview Academy and for some pupils who live in Inverkip.
- 4.4 A number of Councils have been looking at the issue of inequity around the ability of lower income parents/carers to transport their children to school e.g. by car, pay for bus fares etc. This issue was included in the School Transport Review Report which was presented to elected members at the Education and Communities Committee meeting on 08 September 2015, with a poverty element being included in 3 of the 4 options which were considered as part of the school transport review.
- 4.5 At their meeting on 08 September 2015, members of the Education and Communities Committee decided that a full formal consultation exercise be undertaken based on the preferred option of changing to 2.5 and 1.5 miles for secondary and primary schools respectively and including an element for those pupils eligible for free school meals at 1.5/1 miles (option 3) with a proposed implementation date of August 2017.
- 4.6 The proposed changes to school transport provision were included in the Council's proposed budget savings for 2017/18 and were included in the package of savings proposals which were subject to public consultation in November/December 2015. The public were consulted on 2 options:
 - **Option 1:** Change limits so that secondary children who live 2.5 miles from their school and those who live 1.5 miles from their primary school will receive free school transport. There would be a 'poverty element' included for those who receive free school meals to access transport at closer distances.
 - **Option 2:** Change limits so that secondary children who live 3 miles from their school and those who live 2 miles from their primary school will receive school transport. There would be a 'poverty element' included for those who receive free school meals to access transport at closer distances.

The responses received from the consultation exercise are as follows:

Budget Simulator 78.2% agree, 21.8% disagree

Comments from Budget Simulator:

Of those who commented the majority supported increasing the distance, provided there were safe walking routes to schools and support for those on low incomes. 53 people commented on this proposal and of those 38 supported a reduction in school transport, 10 did not support a reduction and 5 submitted general comments. A number of people commented that they supported the move to equality across all the schools in terms of provision.

Public meetings There was a mixed response to this proposal with some in favour of Option 1, some in favour of Option 2, and some resistant to any change.

Simulator 'sliders' **78.72%** support a reduction in school transport (43.26% support an increase to 1.5/2.5 miles for eligibility for school transport, 35.46% support an increase to 2/3 miles) and only 21.28% do not support any change

4.7 Under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, if a local authority proposes to discontinue arrangements for the provision of transport for pupils attending a denominational school, it must undertake a statutory consultation with key stakeholders affected by the proposal. Inverclyde Council will undertake a consultation exercise in respect of all mainstream primary and secondary schools in this instance.

4.8 The number of schools in receipt of transport with the current mileage limits is as follows: 13 primary schools and 6 secondary schools.

5.0 PROPOSAL

5.1 Consultation Proposal

It is proposed that our planned statutory consultation will begin on Monday 12 September 2016 and close on Monday 31 October 2016. The formal consultation on the proposal will be undertaken under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The consultation requires to run for 30 school days.

The suggested wording of the consultation proposal is as follows:

The statutory requirements of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 entitles secondary school pupils to receive free transport to school if they live 3 miles from their catchment school, and for primary school pupils if they live 2 miles from their catchment school.

Inverclyde Council currently provides free transport to secondary pupils who live 2 miles from their catchment school and to primary school pupils who live 1 mile from their catchment school.

Inverclyde Council is seeking your views on the proposal to increase the mileage limits for free school transport:

- *to secondary pupils residing more than 2.5 miles from their school;*
- *to primary pupils residing more than 1.5 miles from their school; and*
- *to introduce an element for those children and young people entitled to free school meals, due to receipt of income support, to enable them to access transport at closer distances of 1.5 miles (secondary pupils) and 1 mile (primary pupils).*

5.2 Consultation Proposal Document

A consultation document will require to be produced for all key stakeholders. It is proposed that the content of this document is as follows:

1. Background to proposal (including responses from Budget Savings exercise)
2. The consultation process
3. Implementation for the proposal
4. Educational benefits
5. Impact on the local community affected by the proposal
6. Financial implications
7. Responding to the proposal
8. Appendices
9. Consultation response form

The consultation document will also contain details of the other options considered by the Education and Communities Committee and the reasons for arriving at the decision to go for

option 3. The consultation response form will provide consultees with an opportunity to propose alternative options.

5.3 Access to Consultation Exercise

It is proposed that key stakeholders can participate in the consultation exercise through the following:

- Online survey
- Consultation document (with feedback form) to be made available online along with other relevant documents such as maps and details of safe walking routes to school
- Public meetings
- Hard copies of consultation document with a pre-paid envelope to assist anyone who wishes to make a response by paper

Parent/carers will initially be informed about the consultation process by letter signed by the Corporate Director Education, Communities and Organisational Development and issued by Head Teachers. In addition, notification of the consultation exercise will be circulated via social media.

5.4 Consultees

Key Stakeholders for consultation:

- The parent Council of affected schools
- The parents/carers of the pupils at the affected schools
- Parents who children are expected to attend the affected schools within 2 years of publication of the proposal document
- Pupils (where they are considered to be of suitable age and maturity)
- Council employees at the affected schools
- Trade Union representatives
- Church representatives of the affected school

Other stakeholders who will be contacted:

- Education Scotland
- Elected members
- SPT/local school transport providers
- Police Scotland
- Roads Department colleagues
- General Public (Inverclyde)

Consultees will be informed that in order for their views to be taken into account, they must complete and submit a copy of the Consultation Response Form.

5.5 Requirement from Head Teachers

Head Teachers will be asked to:

- Send a copy of the consultation proposal document to Parent Councils (Education HQ will also send a copy to PC Chairs)
- Send all parents/carers a letter which provides details of the proposal, how to access the feedback forms and online survey, as well as dates for public meetings
- Pupil Councils will be made aware of the consultation and invited to make a response on behalf of pupils. If any young person wishes to express their views on the matter they can complete the on-line survey.
- Inform all staff about the consultation exercise
- Update letter for parents/carers on outcome of consultation process.

5.6 Employee Briefing

An Employee Briefing will be prepared for admin staff in schools and HQ to assist them in dealing with enquiries about the consultation exercise.

5.7 Requirements of Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 – Timeline

The above legislation has 4 required phases relating to this particular statutory consultation:

- Phase 1 An education authority consults on a proposal – for a minimum of six weeks, including at least 30 school days
- Phase 2 Preparation of Education Scotland’s report on the educational aspects of the proposal – to be completed within a maximum of 3 weeks
- Phase 3 Consultation report – within no specified timescale, the authority prepares and publishes a consultation report
- Phase 4 Authority decision – a minimum of 3 weeks after the publication of the consultation report the authority publishes its final decision

A suggested timeline for the above Phases which will apply to the statutory consultation on school transport is as follows:

- Phase 1 Monday 12 September 2016 – Monday 31 October 2016
- Phase 2 End November 2016
- Phase 3 Mid December 2016
- Phase 4 January/February 2017 (Special meeting of the Education and Communities Committee)

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Finance

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments
Education	Education HQ	2016/17	tbc		Potential costs will relate to staff and administration associated with the consultation process These costs will be contained within Education Services’ budget

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
Education	School Transport	August 2017	Preferred Option: Part year £120,000 Full year £170,000		These figure relate to the savings relating to Option 3 as per Education and Communities Committee report (September 2015)

6.2 Legal

The proposed change to school transport provision is within the statutory requirements of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 for secondary and primary school pupils.

6.3 Human Resources

N/A.

6.4 Equalities

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

Yes This was completed for the School Transport Review Report that was considered by the Education & Communities Committee on 08 September 2015.

No This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

6.5 Repopulation

N/A

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 In the current financial climate where the Council is facing severe financial constraints, it is appropriate to review our school transport provision as part of Education Services contribution to the Council's required budget savings proposals. The review of school transport will also enable us to ensure an equality of school transport provision across all our schools.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 Education and Communities Report (8 September 2015) 'Schools Transport Policy Review Update – Equality in Provision of School Transport for Inverclyde Schools'.