

## **Learning, Skills and Economy Scrutiny Committee Scrutiny Observations to Cabinet on: Home to School Transport**

The Learning, Skills and Economy Scrutiny Committee met on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2018 and considered the following documents:

- Draft Cabinet Report on Home to School/College Transport Policy and Consultation Report v5
- Appendix A Consultation Summary Report
- Appendix B Home to School/College Transport Policy – consultation version
- Appendix C Home to School/College Transport Policy – post consultation version
- Appendix D Impact Assessment

The Learning, Skills and Economy Scrutiny Committee thank Senior Manager School Transformation, Principal Officer Admissions and Transport and Passenger Transport Operations Officer for attending scrutiny. It was unfortunate the Portfolio Holder was unable to attend as this meeting fell within the holiday period. However, in order to meet the deadlines for September Cabinet it was necessary to hold this meeting in August.

### Scrutiny make the following observations:

It is clear that there is insufficient information contained within the report to make an informed decision on a number of areas. This is recognised within the recommendations and scrutiny welcome the acknowledgement that additional work is required before decisions can be taken regarding the issue of charging for Post 16 transport and how the transport policy can be used to support the aims contained within the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

However, there were a number of other omissions from the policy that make it difficult for scrutiny to be able to fully consider the Policy. These include:

- A lack of definition of 'Catchment School' within the policy (this is defined within the covering Cabinet report and noted as a Main Change but does not appear in the Policy)

- A lack of Catchment Maps attached to the policy which is an essential requirement for parents to understand where their child is eligible to attend school
- Transitional arrangements are not outlined and an implementation date should be included for clarity with details of transitional arrangements if these are to be arranged

Questioning on the point of Catchment School and Nearest School revealed that some postcodes will fall in two catchment areas. Whilst there maybe historical reasons for this and strong local feeling against changing the status quo, scrutiny query the appropriateness of offering a choice of schools to some pupils which is not replicated across the county on the basis of fairness. Scrutiny believe equality is paramount.

- A financial analysis was lacking which meant it is not possible to ascertain the impact of the changes that are intended to be made (for example regarding transport provision for ALN learners) or changes that could be made (for example regarding defining postcodes to be in a single catchment)

In respect of the further work to be undertaken with regard to charging for Post 16 transport it is recommended that a full investigation is undertaken covering both the financial aspects of any change and the impact this may have on encouraging retention of students in the county. This should be linked to consideration of the Offer that Powys is able to make to Post 16 pupils in comparison to other providers such as Hereford and Shrewsbury College as at present these are clearly able to attract Powys students who are willing to travel incurring both a financial and time cost.

The consultation process and responses are included but it is noted that the response was limited and not geographically valid. It appears that engagement has been undertaken with parents and pupils currently using this service but it appeared that consultation had not reached those parents and pupils who would be affected by the policy in the future.

Concern was expressed that the current contracting arrangements may not encourage contractors to invest in high quality vehicles which could result in safety concerns. This is outside the remit of the matter under discussion and would be appropriate for referral to the Audit Committee.

## **Recommendations**

- **That the policy is amended to clarify the points raised in particular:**
  - **a full set of definitions**
  - **the provision of catchment maps**
  - **transitional arrangements**
- **That financial analysis is undertaken so that the impact of the changes that could be taken can be clearly understood**
- **That the impact of the proposed changes on current users is assessed**
- **That Learning Skills and Economy Scrutiny Committee be given the opportunity to scrutinise the further work proposed regarding Post 16 transport and the links between the Home to School Transport Policy and Welsh in Education Strategic Policy**
- **That the contractual arrangements for home to school transport be referred to Audit Committee for consideration**

Membership of the Learning, Skills and Economy Scrutiny Committee on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2018

County Councillors **B Davies (in the Chair)**, G Breeze, K W Curry, S. Davies, D Evans, E M Jones, G Jones, D Jones-Poston, I McIntosh, S McNicholas, J Pugh, L Roberts, E Roderick, D Selby and G Thomas.

Parent Governor S Davies and Church Representative M Evitts