



## Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee

### Scrutiny Observations to Cabinet on: 09/06/2020

The Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee met on 05/06/2020 and considered the following documents:

- School Transport Policy

The Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee thank the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Transport and Countryside and officers for attending scrutiny.

#### Scrutiny make the following observations:

- Although the current policy is unchanged until school transformation has been undertaken, the definition of 'catchment school' is unclear and this needs to be made clearer as parents will be concerned about this.
- Can information from the Council's GIS System (Geographic Information System) i.e. what schools pupils can attend, transport routes, or where schools transport is available to which school, be made available to parents through the Council website.
- SEN / ALN / LAC – it was understood that the provision remains unchanged but there is less detail in the document.
- Concern that previously for LAC pupils whose residence was changed by Social Care the cost of their transport to the same school was charged against the Education budget rather than the Social Care budget. It was clarified that the School Transport budget now rested with the Transport Unit and there was better control over spending. The Committee asked for clarification of the interaction between the Social Care and Transport budgets.
- Wearing of seat belts by pupils on school transport and responsibility for enforcing this policy – the Senior Manager - Corporate Fleet and Transport was asked to clarify the current legal position.
- Hazardous routes – there are no criteria to identify what is meant by a hazardous route and where they are in Powys – could this information be provided. It was clarified that in appeals cases a risk assessment of a route is undertaken, and each case is considered on an individual basis.
- Concern that the role of Members in appeals has been diminished with an officer taking the decision rather than the relevant Portfolio Holder. It was clarified that this was in line with the majority of other Councils and the role of the local Member had not changed. It was only the role of the Portfolio Holder which had changed.
- Definition of Welsh school requires clarification i.e. are these schools providing some or 100% Welsh Language provision. It was understood that the aim of transformation is to improve Welsh Language provision in Powys and that the transport policy will need to be reviewed as transformation progresses. There was also a question of whether a parent could select another school rather than the nearest one if it provided a better Welsh Language provision. The policy required clarification in respect of this point.

- The Impact Assessment requires reviewing in terms of impact on 16 -19 pupils by not reimbursing them for travelling out of county for courses. The current assessment is Neutral. The Committee was concerned that pupils might not be able to undertake those courses out of county if they could not afford the costs of travel. In addition, if those courses were available in Powys this could be a mitigation, but currently this was not the case. It was explained that the revision would not impact on current but future pupils, but the Committee viewed the current Impact Assessment as weak in this respect. If pupils also returned to Powys from elsewhere there would be a knock-on impact on the need for more teachers in Powys which was not taken into account, although the Council would benefit financially from pupils remaining in county.
- The policy does not take account of exceptional circumstances where pupils have to move residence e.g. as a result of domestic violence. It was explained that where parents split transport would be provided from both places of residence. Whether the exemptions were adequate could be tested during the consultation process.
- It was felt that traveller children were also not covered adequately in the policy and scrutiny might wish to consider the provision for traveller children by the Council.
- Consultation:
  - Minor amendments to the consultation document – addition of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and Powys Pride. Also, reference should be to Members of the Senedd not AMs.
  - The Committee asked if as pupils were returning to school, could some paper based consultations be undertaken or webinars for parents. It was indicated that this could be considered.
  - It was suggested that the text system used by schools should be used to alert parents to the on-line consultation.
  - It would be useful to have a question on a parent's understanding of 'catchment' in the consultation.
  - The Committee stressed that the consultation timetable should also match up with the revised school timetable, following the reopening of schools in Wales.

Scrutiny's Recommendation	Accept (plus Action and timescale)	Partially Accept (plus Rationale and Action and timescale)	Reject (plus Rationale)
1 Need for further clarification of what is meant by 'catchment school'			
2 Consideration of more information being available for parents on the Council's website e.g. availability of school transport to schools			
3 Senior Manager – Corporate Fleet and Transport to provide information to scrutiny			

<p>regarding:</p> <p>(a) the interaction between the Social Care and Transport budgets;</p> <p>(b) the legal position regarding the wearing of seat belts by pupils.</p>			
<p>4 That the definition of Welsh school in the policy requires clarification.</p>			
<p>5 That the Impact Assessment in relation to 16-19 pupils be reviewed and strengthened</p>			
<p>6 That the adequacy of exemptions in the policy be tested in the consultation process.</p>			
<p>7 Consultation:</p> <p>(a) That minor amendments be included;</p> <p>(b) That some paper based consultation and webinars be considered;</p> <p>(c) That text systems used by schools be used to alert parents to the consultation;</p> <p>(d) That a question on parents' understanding of catchment be included in the consultation;</p> <p>(e) That the consultation timetable needs to match the revised school timetable.</p>			

In accordance with Rule 7.27.2 the Cabinet is asked to provide a written response to the scrutiny report, including an action plan where appropriate, as soon as possible or at the latest within 2 months of the date of the Cabinet meeting i.e. by 09/08/2020

Membership of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Group / Committee on 05/06/2020:  
County Councillors:

P. Roberts, E. Roderick, L. Roberts, J. Berriman, D. Jones, S. Davies, G. Thomas,  
K. Laurie-Parry

Co-Opted Members: A. Davies, S. Davies, G. Robson.