



Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Observations to Cabinet on: 15th September, 2020

The Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee met on 7th September, 2020 and considered the following documents:

- School Transport Policy

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

Scrutiny make the following observations:

- Changes to proposals for 16 to 19 transport costs – The majority of the Committee welcomed the amendment to the proposal.
- Lack of clarity in the policy about what is meant by the catchment or nearest high school to which a pupil could receive free transport. [Response: this is an issue to be clarified in the School Admissions Policy rather than this policy]. Greater clarity needed by the Education Service as to the definition of nearest or catchment school for the purposes of school transport routes. Also a glossary of terms in the policy would be helpful.
- Scrutiny welcomed the plans to make catchment maps publicly available in the next few weeks, which was a previous recommendation by scrutiny.
- There is an inconsistency in the policy between English and Welsh Medium where transport will not be provided to schools outside the county, but this is permissible for Welsh Medium education as Powys does not have a Welsh Medium high school.
- Concerns by parents that the consultation document was not clear enough and meant that they included comments to clarify their views.
- The Committee was concerned that the £75,000 identified as a saving in the report, was unrealisable because it did not include any additional costs resulting from these pupils requiring transport to an educational establishment within the county.
- The Committee were concerned at the absence of a detailed Impact Assessment and mitigation in respect of the post 16 changes. As this is an officer recommendation Committee felt that the Cabinet should have a full Impact Assessment available to them so they can understand the impact of them rejecting the recommendation.
- The Committee expressed a desire for greater co-operation between Powys and Shropshire County Councils to enable pupils in Shropshire who wish to receive Welsh Medium education in Powys Schools to be able to receive that through an agreed access protocol. [Response: Portfolio Holder agreed to speak to Shropshire County Council]
- Scrutiny was concerned about ambiguities in the wording of Section 2.6 of the Schools Transportation Policy. Scrutiny asked that this is clarified as the policy as written appears to suggest that a child would temporarily be taken to a different school from their usual school whilst incapacitated which is not the case.

- Clarity over Welsh Medium provision – is this bilingual schools, dual stream or Welsh Medium? [Response: this is for the Education Service to define rather than the Transport Policy. Welsh Medium currently means all Welsh provision]
- Scrutiny was concerned that paragraph 2.2 of the School Transport Policy does not completely reflect the current practice in respect of providing financial support to pupils travelling out of county to receive post 16 provision that is unavailable within the Powys Education sector.

Scrutiny's Recommendation	Accept (plus Action and timescale)	Partially Accept (plus Rationale and Action and timescale)	Reject (plus Rationale)
1 Greater clarity needed by the Education Service as to the definition of nearest or catchment school for the purposes of school transport routes.		The Catchment areas will be defined and set by the schools service through the School Admissions Policy. Work is on-going to have a set of maps published this autumn	
2 That a glossary of terms be included in the in the policy			Throughout the policy, we define various sections where it is relevant to do so. For example, in Section 1.1 of the policy the definition of 'suitable school' is given and in 1.2 a definition is given on 'shortest available route'.
3 That the Cabinet should have a full Impact Assessment available to them so they can understand the impact of them rejecting the officer recommendation in respect of post 16 changes	The impact assessment has been updated to reflect the new Policy. A sentence has been added to state that there is a negative impact on the Council's revenue funding by not proceeding with the proposal.		
4 That the Portfolio Holders discuss with Shropshire County Council to enable pupils in Shropshire who wish to receive Welsh Medium education in Powys Schools to be able to receive that through an agreed access protocol	Discussions will be had over the autumn / winter term – but any agreement will need to be reflected through the Admissions Policy		
5 That paragraph 2.6 of the Policy be clarified	2.6 of the policy now clarifies that transport will only be provided to a learner with short term		

	medical needs if they are attending their nearest or catchment school and not to their nearest school		
6	That paragraph 2.2 of the School Transport Policy be clarified as it does not completely reflect the current practice in respect of providing financial support to pupils travelling out of county to receive post 16 provision that is unavailable within the Powys Education sector	The wording in the policy has been amended slightly to clarify what we provide in practice is reflected in the policy that we provide transport for post 16 learners to attend their nearest school or college in Powys and that we may provide travel assistance to attend their nearest suitable provision.	

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 15th November, 2020.

Membership of the Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee on 7th September, 2020:
County Councillors:

P. Roberts, E. Roderick, J. Berriman, S. Davies, L. Roberts, D. Jones, B. Davies, G. Thomas, K. Laurie-Parry and Co-Opted Members G. Robson, M Evitts, A, Davies and S. Davies.