

## **Report to the Cabinet**

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 4 February 2021

### **Report of the Head of Service - School Improvement**

#### **Part I**

Electoral Division affected:  
(All Divisions);

### **Determination of Home to School Transport Policy - Academic Year 2022/2023**

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

Debbie Ormerod, Tel: (01772) 531878, School Access and Entitlement Manager  
debbie.ormerod@lancashire.gov.uk

#### **Executive Summary**

Lancashire County Council reviews the Home to School Transport policy on an annual basis. There are no changes to the determined policy for the academic year 2022/2023.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order C19 have been complied with.

#### **Recommendation**

Cabinet is asked to approve the Home to School Transport Policy for the academic year 2022/2023 as set out at Appendix 'A'.

#### **Background and Advice**

In accordance with the Education School Information Regulations 2008 (Regulation 8.), the county council has a duty to publish all relevant information that may inform parental decision making when applying for a secondary school, no later than six weeks before the closing date for secondary school applications which is 31 October each year.

Additionally, the county council is required to publish general arrangements and policies in respect of home to school travel for children of compulsory school age. The county council informs parents of entitlement to receive transport assistance by publishing a Home to School Transport Policy on the Lancashire County Council website and it is reviewed annually.

## **Statutory Entitlement**

The Department for Education issued statutory guidance in July 2014 that reaffirmed that Local Authorities had a duty to provide free transport for all pupils of compulsory school age (5-16) if their nearest suitable school is:

- beyond 2 miles (if below the age of 8); or
- beyond 3 miles (if aged between 8 and 16)

Pupils attending secondary schools whose parents are on the qualifying benefits for free school meals, or in receipt of the maximum amount of Working Tax Credit, also receive assistance with travel costs if they attend one of their three nearest schools, provided the distance to school is between 2 and 6 miles. For low income families there is also denominational transport assistance if a pupil is attending a particular school on the grounds of faith and the school is between 2 and 15 miles from home.

Additionally, the Department for Education's statutory guidance stipulates that transport arrangements should also be made for all children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest suitable school, because the nature of the route is deemed unsafe to walk when accompanied by an adult.

## **Recent changes in the County Council's Home to School Transport Policy**

In light of the current financial climate, there has been careful examination and review of all areas of expenditure, including home to school transport.

It is parental preferences for schools and academies and the application of admission arrangements linked to these which informs and drives the subsequent application of the Local Authority's home to school transport policy. The council has no statutory duty to provide transport assistance in circumstances where pupils do not attend their nearest school or academy. In the past, Lancashire was able to exercise discretion to provide transport assistance over and above that which the authority was legally obliged to offer.

To enable delivery of the service within a reduced budget envelope there have been a number of consultations, followed by significant changes to the home to school transport policy in recent years:

- In September 2011, the county council introduced a parental contribution towards the costs of providing transport assistance for any new pupils attending denominational schools, where the school was not the nearest geographically to the home address. To qualify for the denominational subsidy pupils had to meet the faith criteria for admission and live over the statutory walking distances. From September 2018, the county council removed subsidised discretionary denominational transport assistance for pupils attending faith schools. The denominational transport assistance will no longer be available for pupils starting secondary school in September 2022. However, there may be a small number of primary aged pupils who still qualify. In September 2015, the county council removed further discretionary elements of the policy. All new pupils starting at secondary schools – or over

the age of eight - are only given paid transport assistance if they attend their nearest school and live more than three miles away. When undertaking assessments, there is no longer any consideration of which Geographical Priority Area a pupil lives within and schools in neighbouring districts and local authorities are also considered.

Department for Education guidance suggests that any changes to policies should be phased-in, so that children who start under one set of transport arrangements continue to benefit from them until they conclude their education at that school or move to another school. All of the county council's policy changes have now been in place for 5 years, and therefore there should no longer be situations arising where an older pupil receives transport assistance but a younger sibling does not qualify.

### **Information about the availability of transport assistance**

The admission information which is available for all parents from each September (online and paper where requested) provides a summary transport policy. Parents are advised to check the policy carefully if getting their child from home to school and back is a consideration. Parents are directed to a full copy of the Home to School Transport Policy on the Lancashire County Council website and are encouraged to seek advice from the area education office if they have any queries. The county council also has officers in attendance at most secondary school open evenings to give advice on transport eligibility and admission queries.

### **Consultations**

It has not been necessary to consult on the Home to School Transport Policy 2022/2023 as there have been no changes.

### **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### **Risk management**

There are no suggested changes to parental entitlement to receive transport assistance.

### **List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
None		
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A		