

By: Grahame Ward, Director of Capital Programme & Infrastructure
Keith Abbott, Director of Resources & Planning
Sarah Hohler, Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education

To: Resources & Infrastructure Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 15 April 2010

Subject: CFE TRANSPORT BUDGET

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To provide Members with an overview of the CFE Directorate Transport Budget

Introduction

1. (1) This report is for information purposes and has been produced in response to a request for a factual overview of the Directorate transport budget, excluding the SEN transport provision which is being looked at by the IMG.

(2) The report is broken down into four sections covering the following areas of transport provision:

- Mainstream
- Denominational
- Selective
- College

(3) Members will be aware that the 'Freedom Pass' is administered and managed within the Environment, Highways and Waste Directorate and is not therefore covered in this report.

Mainstream

2. (1) The latest financial monitoring (elsewhere on the Agenda), shows a current net cash limit of £14.754m, and a forecast underspend against that of £0.948m. The underspend is the result of:

- renegotiated contracts
- fewer numbers of pupils travelling (4-5% less compared with last year)
- savings arising from the snow ie less journeys

(2) The number of pupils transported clearly alters on a regular basis, but the most recent information available suggests that there are just over 19,250 pupils receiving assisted transport to school.

(3) Pupils' entitlement to free mainstream transport is largely based upon distance criteria, which prescribe statutory walking limits for the distance between the

pupil's home and school (two miles for under 8s and three miles for over 8s). Our policy for transport to secondary schools also takes into account the scheme of education operating where the pupil lives and transport is provided to the nearest appropriate school for transport purposes. This means that a child who has been assessed to be of grammar school ability will normally be provided with transport to attend their nearest appropriate grammar school. A child deemed to be of high school ability would be provided with transport to attend their nearest appropriate high school and in the comprehensive area, comprehensive schools are deemed to be the nearest appropriate schools for transport purposes for all aptitudes and abilities. Exceptions to this policy are made for parents expressing a preference for their children to attend faith or denominational schools (see later in report).

(4) The Education and Inspections Act 2006 extended the right to free transport for low income groups (children entitled to free school meals and children of parents receiving working tax credit) and reduced the statutory walking distance to two miles for pupils aged eight but under 11 for low income families.

Denominational

3. (1) The cost of denominational transport is contained within the budget for mainstream transport, but colleagues within Transport Integration have been able to extract information for us and the position is as follows.

The total cost of transporting 2403 pupils on denominational grounds is £2.4m.

Selective

4. (1) The cost of transporting 8944 selective pupils is £2.7m

College

5. (1) The latest financial monitoring (included in this Agenda), shows a current cash limit of £1.058m (it is contained within the Awards budget), and a forecast overspend of £0.392m, which results from:

- an increase in the cost of adult train fares following the renegotiation of mainstream and college transport contracts;
- the number of SEN students requiring transport; and
- a rise in the number of students attending part-time and hence requiring multiple taxi trips which has been elevated further by higher industry costs (such as fuel).

(2) The number of pupils transported clearly alters on a regular basis, but the most recent information available says that there were 2186 students.

(3) Pupils receive free entitlement to Post 16 School and College transport based on the criteria for Free School Meals thereby targeting the most in need.

The individual benefits that qualify are:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance

- an income-related employment and support allowance support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual income that does not exceed £16,190 as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
- The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit

If parents are not in receipt of one of the above benefits then they can obtain a subsidised ticket by paying either a lump sum of £490 or £165 for terms one and two, and £160 for term three.

Recommendations

Members of the Resources and Infrastructure Policy & Scrutiny Overview Committee are asked to note the information.

Grahame Ward

Director of Capital Programme & Infrastructure

Tel: 01622 696551

Grahame.ward@kent.gov.uk

Keith Abbott

Director of Resources and Planning Group

01622 686588

Keith.abbott@kent.gov.uk

Background Documents: None

Other Useful Information: None