

From: Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education and Young People's Services

To: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

Subject: Post-16 Transport Policy Statement

Classification: Unrestricted

Future Pathway of Paper: **Cabinet Member Decision**

Summary: Each year KCC has a legal duty to consult on its Policy for Post 16 Transport and publish a Post 16 Transport Policy Statement by the 31 May 2017.

Recommendation(s): Members are asked to note the proposed Post 16 Transport Policy (attached) which is currently out to consultation and remains unchanged from 2016/17.

The Cabinet Member is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations on the proposed policy ahead of a final Post 16 Transport Policy Statement to be published by 31 May 2017.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The report is designed to update Members in regard to decisions taken relating to the 16+ Travel Card.
- 1.2 The attached policy makes it clear that in the first instance there is an expectation that learners will make use of the 16+ Travel Card, seeking bursary funding support where necessary to access this as a preferred means of accessing education, training or a work based learning setting. It also sets out the duties on the LA to consider requests for transport and is a continuum of existing policy.
- 1.3 KCC is required to enable access to education and will consider applications for support where a 16+ Travel Card is not suitable and where additional support is refused learners can appeal to the Transport Regulation Committee Appeal Panel.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The scheme is uncapped and costs will vary marginally depending on take up levels and journeys undertaken by cardholders. We would expect the level of subsidy required for the 16+ Travel Card to be in the region of £440k; with a further £1.5m budgeted to enable 16+ SEN learners to access college.

3. Policy Framework

- 3.1 The Post 16 Transport Policy will assist learners in accessing their preferred learning environments and contribute to Kent's Strategic Outcomes which state that children and young people in Kent will get the best start in life and achieve good outcomes by participating in education or training to age 18.

4. The Report

- 4.1 KCC has a duty to consider applications for transport and is required to enable access to education. In most circumstances it meets this duty through the 16+ Travel Card. This is a generous discretionary scheme which aids access to both education and employment with training. The card will continue to be made available at the agreed cost of £400 a year with no limit on the use. Learning providers, at their discretion, can subsidise this further using bursary funding and we would expect charges to be reduced by up to 50% for low income families.
- 4.2 KCC has a duty to consult on and publish its Post 16 Transport Policy Statement each year. Whilst there is no statutory duty to provide transport for Post 16 Learners, there is a duty to consider applications for assistance with transport and to enable access to education and training to age 18. The transport policy sets out how KCC will meet this duty and what learners can expect by way of support.
- 4.3 Schools, colleges and learning providers have been consulted, as have their students. Neighbouring local authorities and Public Transport have also been included in the consultation, as have parents. The consultation on the proposed policy ran until the 23 March 2017.
- 4.4 The policy is attached as appendix 1 and a copy of the consultation document and the equalities impact assessment can be found via the following link: www.kent.gov.uk/post16transport
- 4.5 Feedback from the consultation is attached as appendix 2

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The consultation is a requirement set out in our legal duties. Despite there being no material changes to the policy we must undertake this consultation process. Invariably feedback centres on the cost of the pass and a desire for rail travel to be included. The latter has been explored with rail operators which proved cost prohibitive. Instead KCC has written to the Transport Minister seeking the introduction of reduced fares at peak times for this age group of learners as a formulated national scheme. To date government have resisted this.
- 5.2 Further concerns relate to a poor service level on public bus networks. Officers continue to work with providers in an attempt to ensure sufficient provision is in place. A growing percentage of respondents have highlighted a desire to pay for the service in instalments, and a third of respondents indicated a desire to apply direct to the council, rather than to their education provider. Work will be undertaken to ascertain the possibility of implementing these suggestions in the future.

5.3 The entitlement of learners with an Education, Health and Care Plan remains unchanged from existing policy. There is however an expectation that where appropriate learners with SEND will also access public transport using the 16+ Travel Card and KCC will deliver Independent Travel Training where necessary to assist in developing these necessary life skills.

6. Recommendation(s)

6.1 Members are asked to note the proposed Post 16 Transport Policy (attached) which is currently out to consultation and remains unchanged from 2016/17.

The Cabinet Member is asked to consider and endorse, or make recommendations on the proposed policy ahead of a final Post 16 Transport Policy Statement to be published by 31 May 2017.

7. Background Documents

- Post 16 Transport Policy – appendix 1
- Consultation and Equality Impact Assessment
www.kent.gov.uk/post16transport

8. Contact details

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