

‘School Specials’

subsidised bus services for
Non-statutory Home to School Transport



Economy, Transport and Environment Select Committee 17 March 2016

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Briefing Outline

- Home to School Transport Services statutory and non-statutory
- What we mean by ‘school specials’
- Finance - current costs and planned savings
- Recent Executive Decisions
- Engagement process with schools & parents
- Next Steps

Legislative Background

- **Transport Act (1985)** requires the Council to identify “*socially necessary bus services*” but does not prescribe level of service required
 - Public Bus Services (ETE)
- **Education Act (1996)** requires the Council to make travel arrangements it considers necessary to facilitate attendance at school for those children identified as “*eligible children*” in the Act
 - Home to School Transport (Children’s Services)

The County Council provides HTST for ...

9,600 'entitled' mainstream pupils per day =

@ cost £10m per annum

3,500 SEN pupils per day

@ cost £17m per annum



NB: the provision of statutory HTST will continue and is not affected by ETE's budget reduction

School Special Services

- Subsidised bus services run in some areas of the county (subsidy equivalent to approx £800 per pupil p.a.)
- School specials currently serve 35 schools (three of which are *faith schools* whose HTST is due to end from July 2016 following decision by Childrens Services in 2011)
- Schools specials used by around 791 pupils
- Used primarily by pupils not eligible for statutory HTST (but by 94 eligible pupils)



Recent Executive Decisions

27 Oct 2014: decision to survey school specials and to later consult about possibly retaining the services on a different funding basis

22 Oct 2015: after the Spending Review, Full Council approved a review of HTST with a view to ending discretionary services from Sept 2016 as part of Tt2017 process

19 Jan 2015 – decision to engage relevant schools & parents to explore alternative transport for non-entitled pupils, without HCC funding

Engagement with schools and parents

- All affected schools given advance notice
- Engagement process from 22 Jan to 19 Feb 2016
- Promoted via Hantsweb (Passenger Transport and Childrens Services web pages)
- Schools asked to promote awareness of the change via their websites, newsletters, and 'parentmail'
- HCC officers distributed 975 information leaflets to pupils travelling on school specials

Aim of engagement process

- Ascertain where there is an interest in continuing a level of service by other funding means
- We can offer technical advice on procuring and contracting transport to the affected schools or parent groups
- Also liaising with commercial operators to identify how existing services might help mitigate the impact

Result of engagement process

- 197 responses received
- 18 schools responded
- Individual preferences, where expressed, (1) County Council and bus operators to keep service on a commercial basis (2) parents to buy termly tickets
- School preferences, where expressed, (1) County Council and bus operators to keep service on a commercial basis (2) parents to cover costs with fares

Next Steps

1. Executive Member Decision - 21 March 2016
2. Notification to schools and interested parties – April 2016
3. Subject to decision, technical support on contracts and procurement offered for schools or parent groups interested in running their own services.
4. Measures to come into effect from September 2016