

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment
Date:	21 March 2016
Title:	Review of Non-Statutory Home to School Transport Services
Reference:	7291
Report From:	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to report the results of the recent review and engagement exercise on alternative funding streams for 'school special' bus services that convey non-entitled pupils to schools.

2. Contextual information

2.1. The Transport Act 1985 requires the County Council to identify socially necessary bus services which are not provided by the commercial bus operators.

2.2. 'School specials' are local bus services that primarily provide transport for students who are not entitled to statutory transport. These services are funded from the County Council's bus subsidy budget and have been provided historically at the discretion of the County Council.

2.3. At present, a relatively small proportion of those travelling upon school specials have a statutory entitlement to home to school transport. Regardless of the outcome of the review, the entitlement of these pupils will remain unchanged.

2.4. There are currently 26 'school specials' which provide transport to schools and colleges. Only 1 service, the 145 from Denmead, has been identified as carrying fare paying members of the public, and there are alternative commercial services available for them to continue to travel. A list of the schools currently served by 'school specials' can be found in Appendix 2.

2.5. At his Decision Day on 19 January 2016, the Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment approved engagement with affected schools, and through them parents/guardians, on how alternative transport, if required, could be provided without County Council funding.

- 2.6. Where there is an interest in continuing a level of service by other funding means, County Council officers will offer technical support in procuring and contracting transport to schools or parents' groups.
- 2.7. If any schools or parents raise concerns over the safety of walking routes to schools these will be reviewed under the Road Safety GB criteria, which is the standard method of carrying out this type of assessment.

3. Finance

- 3.1. The current total cost of all affected contracts is £629,298 per annum.
- 3.2. Fares are charged on the 'school specials' services, and operators retain this revenue, without which the contract prices would be higher than current costs. However, it should be noted that the fares charged do not reflect the cost of providing the services and vary widely between routes.
- 3.3. Where entitled students are currently travelling on a 'school special', there will be a requirement for a new form of transport provision. The cost of this transport will be covered by a budget transfer to Childrens Services, which is still being determined.
- 3.4. The level of savings to be achieved from this exercise is expected to be around £450,000 once arrangements have been made for those entitled to home to school transport.

4. Engagement and Information Gathering

- 4.1. As the non-entitled students who use these 'school specials' are fare payers, the County Council does not have contact details for them. The engagement and information gathering exercise has been carried out by firstly writing to the schools served by the 'school specials' to explain the County Council's proposal and asking them to promote the information gathering exercise to the parents/guardians of the students who use the services. Affected schools were informed of the Decision Day proposals in advance so that they could give parents good notice of the opportunity to comment.
- 4.2. The engagement exercise was open from Friday 22 January 2016 to Friday 19 February 2016.
- 4.3. To ensure as many parents/guardians as possible could participate in the review, the following measures were put in place:

Schools served by 'school specials' were asked to promote the opportunity to comment through their websites and any other media available to them, such as newsletters to parents.

County Council officers handed out forms to students travelling on the 'school specials' on homeward bound journeys. A total of 975 forms were distributed.

4.4. Analysis of the data retrieved resulted in the following headlines;

A total of 197 responses were received;

125 responses were on the form provided and 52 emails were received;

18 schools responded;

The preferred option from individuals, where a clear indication was made, was for the County Council liaising with local bus operators to maintain the services on a commercial basis;

The second preferred option from individuals, where a clear indication was made, was for parents/guardians buying a termly bus pass;

The preferred option from schools/organisations, where a clear indication was made, was for the County Council liaising with local bus operators to maintain the services on a commercial basis;

The second preferred option from schools/organisations, where a clear indication was made, was for parents/guardians paying for a service with fares which cover the cost of the service.

4.5. Full details of the exercise can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1. That the findings of the review of non-statutory home to school transport provision are noted, and that approval be given for the withdrawal of subsidies in accordance with the decision of the County Council meeting on 22 October 2015, with effect from the start of the school academic year 2016/17.
- 5.2. That authority be delegated to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment, to agree a transfer of funds to the Childrens Services budget to cover any additional cost in providing for students who have a statutory entitlement to home to school transport as of the base figure at the start of the school academic year 2016/17.
- 5.3. That following the outcome of the recent engagement exercise approved by the County Council on 22 October 2015, the Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment delegates authority to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment to provide technical support on procurement and contracts to schools and parental groups that have expressed an interest in running their own services.
- 5.4. That authority be delegated to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment to liaise with bus operators and any other interested parties to explore potential for retaining services on a commercial basis.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Review of Home to School Transport Contracts	7230	19 January 2016

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

The information gathering exercise was designed to ensure that as many affected people as possible could participate, which included those with protected characteristics. Measures taken to enable as many people as possible to submit their views included;

The engagement and information exercise being promoted on the County Council's website on both the Children's Services Home to School Transport web page and on the Passenger Transport group web page;

County Council Officers distributed paper versions of the information gathering forms to students travelling on the affected buses; and

Affected schools were asked to promote the call for information via their websites and any other available media such as newsletters to parents/guardians.

The review of non-statutory school transport provision will bring the County Council into line with national policy as described in the Education Act of 1996.

On this basis, the review is not thought to have a significant impact on any group with protected characteristics.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. Not applicable

3. Climate Change:

3.1. How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption? Not applicable

3.2. How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts? Not applicable

Appendix 1 – Engagement Exercise: Summary of Data

Total number of responses – 197

Forms completed – 125

Emails received – 52

Responses from individuals – 179

A “Save the Foxhills school Bus Service” petition was started on the change.org website, and a total of 241 people have signed the petition.

Preference of individuals who completed the form and expressed a clear preference – 1 being the most preferred option and 5 being the least preferred option;

	5	4	3	2	1
School or parent group taking on the contract for providing the service		4			
County Council liaising with local bus operators to maintain the service on a commercial basis					1
Parents / guardians paying for a service with fares which cover the cost of the service			3		
Parents / guardians buying a termly bus pass				2	
Parents / guardians taking individual responsibility for their children’s journey to school	5				

Responses from Schools or Organisations – 18

Liss Infant

Liss Junior

Foxhills Junior

South Downs College

Stoke Park Junior

Netley Abbey Junior

Horndean Technology College

Hounslowdown

Salisbury Infant

Netley Abbey Infant

Henry Cort

Foxhills Infant

St Annes Catholic

The following Hayling Island schools provided a joint response;

Mill Rythe Infant

Mengham Infant

Mengham Junior

Mill Rythe Junior

The Hayling College

Preference of schools/organisations who completed the form and expressed a clear preference – 1 being the most preferred option and 5 being the least preferred option;

	5	4	3	2	1
School or parent group taking on the contract for providing the service	5				
County Council liaising with local bus operators to maintain the service on a commercial basis					1
Parents / guardians paying for a service with fares which cover the cost of the service				2	
Parents / guardians buying a termly bus pass			3		
Parents / guardians taking individual responsibility for their children's journey to school		4			

Comments supplied

The 3 most common points raised were;

- Concern over parents/guardians being able to afford increased fares
- Congestion outside schools
- Impact on parents/guardians work arrangements

Appendix 2 – Schools served

Anton Infant & Junior
Applemore College
Costello School
Cowplain School
Crookhorn College
Foxhills Infant & Junior
Hamble Sports College
Harrow Way
Havant College
Henry Cort
Horndean Technology College
Horndean Technology College
Horndean Technology College
Hounslow School
Liss Infant & Junior
Mengham Infant & Junior
Mill Rytte Infant & Junior
Netley Infant & Junior
Noadswood
Oaklands School
Oaklands School
Oaklands School
Sarisbury Infant & Junior
South Downs FE College
St Annes Catholic School
Stoke Park Infant & Junior
St Thomas More School
Wildground Infant & Junior
Winton Community Academy
Wyvern College