

CABINET COMMITTEE

TRAVEL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 1ST MAY 2007
(6.00 PM – 7.45 PM)**



Nottinghamshire
County Council

membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

COUNCILLORS

Councillor David Kirkham – Leader of the Council (Chair)
Councillor Joyce Bosnjak – Cabinet Member for Children and Young
People
Councillor Stella Smedley – Cabinet Member for Environment

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Stan Heptinstall MBE
Councillor Sue Saddington

Alex Newman – Representative of Young People

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

The appointment of Councillor David Kirkham as Chair of the Cabinet Committee was noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Katie Sheppard, a further young person who had been invited to attend the meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest made by Members or Officers.

4. TRANSPORT PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE – TERMS OF REFERENCE, MEMBERSHIP AND PROCESS

RESOLVED: 2007/001

1. That the terms of reference and membership of the Cabinet Committee, as set out in the report, be noted;

2. that the key issues arising from areas under discussion be considered in this Cabinet Committee process and
3. that the Cabinet Committee make recommendations to Cabinet at its meeting on 4th July 2007 and at the appropriate meeting in October 2007.

**5. TRANSPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE –
PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION SETTING OUT THE
BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES FOR PARTICULAR
CONSIDERATION**

Representatives of the Children and Young People's and Communities Departments were in attendance at the meeting and presented to the Cabinet Committee on the specific aspects of the subject as set out below. Comments made by Members and any requests for future action/information are detailed in the respective sections.

Background

Officers referred to the transport legislation which provided the statutory framework for transport for children and young people (namely the Education Acts of 1944, 1980 and 2002). They then provided an overview of the current provision in Nottinghamshire against this framework together with the impact of School Travel Plans on current provision (specifically in terms of the Government's target of all schools having such a plan by 2010) and also commented on other current activities in this respect (for example, Walking Bus Schemes and National Walking to School Weeks).

Education and Inspections Act 2006

Officers reported that in broad terms the content of this Act linked travel provision with the national Government agenda for children and young people and was seeking improvements in travel connected with these significant cultural changes around children and young people. The Act contained four main strands concerning rewriting the existing law, placing an overarching duty on Local Authorities to assess travel needs and promote sustainable travel, extend the rights to free transport for low income groups and allow for Pathfinder Authorities to test innovative solutions. The Act therefore had an impact for travel for all parties – Local Authorities, schools, parents and young people.

The lead-in time for the overarching duties placed on Local Authorities was extremely tight as they applied from April 2007. To support this the DfES was to provide an additional £60,000 to support this duty, but Officers thought that in time Nottinghamshire would be able to attract funds of around £200,000 to support this activity.

Officers reported that the issues concerning the extension of free transport for low income groups was particularly complicated and guidance was awaited

from the Government concerning how eligibility for the maximum amount of Working Tax Credit would be retrieved by Local Authorities. Members noted the complicated nature of this aspect and also that there was an issue concerning children who lived in the more rural areas of the County in terms of distance between home and school. Going forward, Members also noted the risks associated with costs involved (which could well be more than the £200,000 referred to above), the need to be mindful of the different issues affecting urban and rural areas and the position of the bus companies, as commercial organisations, in terms of the County Council seeking to plug any gaps in service in response to the Act.

School Travel Pathfinders

Officers reported that, in addition to the issues reported above, the Government was also encouraging up to 20 Local Authorities to seek School Travel Pathfinder status to provide a range of innovative ideas according to local priorities around, for example, arrangements to support the 14 – 19 age group, arrangements to realise health benefits and arrangements to support travel to schools preferred on grounds of religion or belief. Officers were not sure that the Government would achieve a take-up of 20 Local Authorities as there were difficult issues to determine, particularly around the treatment of parental contributions. It was noted that it was a matter for the County Council to set any charges in this respect and that any income would be ring-fenced and reinvested to promote further sustainable travel.

Cabinet Committee was content for further scoping work on the content of any bid to continue. In this connection, Members and the young person present asked that the following issues be taken into account by Officers:-

- As Pathfinder allowed flexibility, then could not arrangements be suggested to support a wider range of young people than the 14 – 19 age group referred to above?
- would it be possible to integrate Pathfinder with provision for older people?
- could any free use be extended for young people out of school hours and in the evening and
- was it possible to get an idea of the cost of unlimited free travel for children and young people?

Officers also reported that work on the provision of the School Travel Strategy was also ongoing and that information on this would be submitted to the next meeting.

Concessionary travel for young people

Officers referred to the study commissioned by the County Council in investigating the potential for a concessionary travel scheme for young people

aged 11 – 19 (as referred to in appendix 2 to agenda item number 4). They also referred to the potential overlap of this issue into any Pathfinder provision.

Members and the young person in attendance at the meeting were keen that further consideration should be given to this matter and that more information be presented to the next meeting taking account of the issues discussed as under:-

- extending any scheme to include all eligible groups and providing costings, taking into account any administrative savings that may be made and the possibility of any partnership funding from both outside and within the Council
- in any case any scheme to be as simple to understand and administer as possible
- from a young person's point of view any scheme to be able to take you anywhere in the County and link the concession to existing commercial services and
- again from a young person's perspective a proof of age was desirable.

Members thanked the Officers for the information provided and answers given during discussion. Officers would report further on the issues raised at the next meeting of the Cabinet Committee.

RESOLVED:- 2007/002

That the issues raised by Members and the answers and further information to be provided by Officers be noted.

6. QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The member of the press present at the meeting raised questions in respect of the following issues:-

- If free transport for children and young people was introduced would this mean that any application for Pathfinder status would not be pursued due to the charging issues? – the Leader responded that this could be the case, but at the present time the Cabinet Committee was seeking information on all options that were open for consideration
- might it be the case that charging for families just above the threshold could mean that they would lose out financially and that a possible consequence could be an increase in truancy rates – the Leader accepted that this was an associated risk

- would the provision of a concessionary travel scheme for young people increase anti-social behaviour? – Cabinet Committee Members did not think this would happen; felt that such provision would have the opposite effect and were also of the view that the issue needed looking at from the perspective of better access for younger people and
- what would happen to families who lost free transport at a point where they ceased to meet eligibility criteria? – the Leader did not feel that there would be many parents in this situation, but did accept that there was a concern around parents not taking jobs in these circumstances.

RESOLVED:- 2007/003

That the answers provided to the questions raised be noted.

CHAIR

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