



meeting	EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING SELECT COMMITTEE		
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## REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

### **School Transport and Safety: Progress report on actions for 2004 – 2005 and work in progress 2005 - 2006**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. This report provides an update and further information for Members with regard to school transport and safety issues. Together with its appendices it provides a progress report on the Home to School Transport Implementation Plan presented to the Committee in September 2004. In addition, the report expands upon information about school travel plans, travelling safely to and from school, planning and revision of provision including implications for school transport of changes to catchment areas, and examples of work in progress undertaken by the Environment and Education Departments.

#### **Information and Advice**

##### **Background**

2. Following the review of education transport policy undertaken by an Ad Hoc Select Committee completed in January 2004, the findings and recommendations were used to construct a Home to School Transport Implementation Plan. This plan containing a progress report regarding each of the proposed actions is attached as **Appendix 1**. Information about School Travel Plans is available in **Appendix 2**. Policy and operational management of home to school transport are the responsibilities of the Education and Environment Departments respectively. This report is compiled with the collaboration of officers in both departments.

##### **Safety of children travelling to school**

3. Information regarding safety issues identified in the Home to School Transport Implementation Plan e.g. the use of double deck buses, and statistics regarding accidents involving pupils travelling to and from schools are provided in **Appendix 1**, sections 6 and 7. It is very positive to note that the number of injury reports locally is few, whilst national statistics continue to indicate falling numbers of bus related pupil injuries. There is continuing interest and concern to ensure the

safety of children and young people in their journeys to and from school by whatever means. Amongst the many issues considered is that of the provision of seatbelts on school transport, and Members are aware that it is a long term aspiration of the County Council for all buses to be single decked and fitted with seat belts.

4. To place this in context, there is no requirement for a bus carrying pupils to school to be fitted with seatbelts. Coaches and minibuses are required to be fitted with seatbelts in view of their wider uses and structural design. Very few double deck buses have seatbelts and the same is true of many single deck buses. It is likely that the availability of buses equipped with seatbelts will increase over time, and it is the wish of the County Council that where double deck buses are phased out they could be replaced by single deck vehicles fitted with seatbelts. At present, given the age profile and structural design of the bus fleet, many buses are not capable of modification to include seatbelts. The only real alternative would be for the purchase and exclusive use of purpose built single deck buses. The cost of establishing such a fleet run by the County Council would be considerable, indeed the Environment Department estimates that the provision of single deck buses with seatbelts would increase annual costs by £2.5m per annum. Operators, who are not bound to install seatbelts, might not be prepared to incur installation and increased maintenance costs of upgrading non-compliant vehicles or committing the capital cost to purchase new vehicles. In either case the cost would be cascaded to the County Council through increased contract charges. This issue will continue to be kept under review.

#### **Change of catchment areas and implications for school transport**

5. Arrangements for providing transport are made in accordance with the requirements of the Education Acts 1996, 2002 and the Transport Acts 1985 and 2000.

“The County Council will endeavour to ensure the safe movement of pupils and students and will co-ordinate exclusive school transport journeys and local bus services to ensure best value for money is achieved, in particular with respect to efficiency, effectiveness and economy (Transport Act 2000 s152)”

The provision of school places and admission arrangements for schools across the county are subject to annual consultation and review. There is an established system of admissions to schools supported by a catchment area structure, which is in line with the School Admissions Code of Practice. The Home to School Transport Policy overarching statement establishes that:

“The education transport policy of Nottinghamshire County Council will operate within the aims and objectives of the Council’s Strategic Plan and ensure that the Council fulfils its statutory obligations. Within that context the aim of the policy is to provide a high quality transport service as efficiently and economically as possible designed to ensure that pupils get to school within a reasonable time and travel in a safe

and stress free environment. The policy will have regard to the school admission arrangements within the County”.

6. When school closures, amalgamations, the creation of new schools, or the reorganisation of provision in specific localities are considered, the impact on children and families regarding accessibility and transport arrangements are taken into account. Whether proposals concern the amalgamation of adjacent infant/junior schools or more extensive reorganisation such as the reshaping of the 3 tier system in Mansfield or the PFI programme in Bassetlaw, careful scoping and planning at the earliest stages is essential.
7. As proposals take shape communication and planning is reviewed in the course of each project. In Bassetlaw, a project team was convened to specifically address pupil transportation and travel. Various issues are taken into account including the home addresses of pupils, information about existing and projected home to school travel patterns and distances travelled, the number of pupils involved, available walking routes, the availability of existing bus services etc. The provisions within the Transport Policy are applied consistently in the consideration of any revisions to services, and essentially the statutory obligations of the County Council are observed.
8. Future decisions of Central Government in relation to the Schools White Paper are awaited with interest, not least in relation to the implications for home to school transport.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

9. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, Crime and disorder and those using the service. Where such implications are material, they have been described in the text of the report. Members’ attention however is drawn to the following:-

### **Financial Implications**

10. There are no direct financial implications as a consequence of this report, however it makes reference to economic factors in relation to value for money and efficiency in provision of Home to School Transport. The report on Denominational Transport highlights issues regarding the cost effectiveness of these services and is subject to further consideration.

### **Equal Opportunities Implications**

11. The Local Authority is committed to ensuring that all children and young people have access to quality services and are able to travel to and from school in safety and in reasonable time. The specific transport needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs are addressed and a review of this will be completed in the Spring Term 2006.

## **Implications for Service Users**

12. The safety and well-being of children and young people is paramount. All efforts will continue to be made to ensure that schools, parents, children and service providers work together to improve the experience of travel to and from school, and that the services provided are cost effective and efficient.

## **Crime and Disorder Implications**

13. Continuing collaborative work involving the County Council, schools and contractors is developing initiatives to promote good behaviour and citizenship on and around the transport network. The success of the CCTV scheme twinned with further awareness-raising and innovative education programmes will be monitored with a view to assessing the impact on disorder and discipline and pupils' perceptions of their own safety.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

14. That the report and actions being taken are noted and that any issues for future scrutiny by the Committee are identified.

**PAM TULLEY**

Director of Education

## **Background Papers Available for Inspection**

Report of the School Transport Policy Ad Hoc Select Committee 2004  
including a Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Safety Report, Home to School Transport

Home to School Transport Policy 2006

Home to School Transport Policy 1996

M19C1488