



meeting	CABINET	
date	14 November 2007	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Transport Provision for Children and Young People

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of the report is to:
 - a) Outline the response received to the consultation regarding the Nottinghamshire Sustainable School Travel Strategy 2007 – 2011 and proposals for a School Travel Pathfinder Scheme application **Appendix A (consultation document), Appendix B (table of responses), Appendix C (summary of comments)**
 - b) Present the School Travel Pathfinder Scheme application for approval as requested by Cabinet on 25 July 2007 **Appendix D.**

Information and advice

Background

2. At its meeting on 25 July 2007, Cabinet considered the potential of participating in a School Transport Pathfinder Scheme as outlined in guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). From applications to be submitted, up to 20 Local Authorities may become pathfinder authorities, and some funding has been identified from central government to support the initiatives (see section 6, Financial Implications). It is anticipated that schemes will commence in September 2009 until July 2012 and be subject to annual evaluation. Members considered the objectives of Pathfinder together with the requirements which it will place on Local Authorities, and also the wider context of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 in relation to travel for children and young people. Cabinet resolved that a School Travel Pathfinder application be progressed for final approval prior to submission to the DCSF by 30 November 2007.
3. A Cabinet Committee was established earlier in the year to review the provision of enhanced travel opportunities including the development of sustainable transport for children and young people across the

county. The Committee met on 1 May 2007, 13 June 2007 and 15 October 2007 and considered the development of the Sustainable Travel Strategy together with a draft of the Pathfinder Application. Committee also heard the views of young people in attendance. Particular representation was made arising from consultation at the County Youth Assembly in June regarding transport for young people.

4. Guidance from the DCSF requires that School Travel Schemes “should be designed to meet local needs and aspirations”. Local Authorities are advised to consult widely prior to submitting a formal application. **Appendix A** “Travel to school in Nottinghamshire; a school travel pathfinder scheme” is the consultation document circulated extensively to stakeholders county wide. The consultation period ran from the week beginning 10 September 2007 and closed on Friday 19 October 2007. Responses have been collated and carefully considered in order to inform the shape of the final bid proposal.

Consultation process and responses; “Travel to school in Nottinghamshire, a school travel pathfinder scheme”

5. The consultation paper and questionnaire explores a range of possible measures and innovations which draw upon the key areas for development identified within our Sustainable School Transport Strategy for Nottinghamshire 2007 – 2011. Respondents were invited to comment on the strategy itself, and then on 5 elements or themes which it was proposed would form the basis the Pathfinder Scheme;

(1a) Further measures to improve safety and behaviour on school transport

(1b) Greater promotion of bus travel, cycling and walking amongst young people

(1c) Improved co-ordination of education and transport to allow additional and more flexible travel arrangements

(1d) Charging for some pupils who currently receive free travel MAY be introduced. Under the scheme children and young people may purchase a subsidised annual pass to travel to and from school on a school bus (up to £250 for primary age pupils; up to £300 for secondary age pupils).

(1e) A half fare travel scheme would be introduced for all children and young people (11-19 years) in full time education, available for use on buses and trams across Nottinghamshire. This may be used at most times of the day and evening including weekends and school holidays. Depending on the Pathfinder funding available, this may be phased in across the age range over the period 2009-2012.

6. The questionnaire enabled comments in writing together with YES or NO responses to be recorded in relation to each element and the overall package of proposals. Responses which arrived on the

week day following the closing date were included in the total. On line responses were also welcomed. By 22 October 2007, a total of 1863 responses were received, all of which have been taken into account in the construction of the final application, **Appendix D**. Guidance makes it clear that all applications for Pathfinder status must have general support of stakeholders. The purpose of the consultation has been to gauge the level of support or otherwise for these themes or proposals, and any other views of stakeholders.

7. The questionnaire stimulated few specific comments regarding the draft Sustainable School Travel Strategy as a whole in contrast to the many comments received in relation to the Pathfinder. Responses to the strategy included comments such as;

‘a good document’
 ‘improved safety, better access to cycle routes’
 ‘good to promote sustainable alternatives to the car’
 ‘we need more rural services’

8. Total responses in relation to the Pathfinder proposals were as follows:

Responses	YES	%	NO	%
(1a)	1659	89%	180	10%
(1b)	1704	91%	142	8%
(1c)	1702	91%	123	7%
(1d)	797	43%	1010	54%
(1e)	1579	85%	251	13%
(2) Are you in overall agreement with the package of proposals?	1536	82%	273	15%
(3) Do you think the County Council should apply for Pathfinder status?	1554	83%	262	14%

9. **Appendix B** shows in table form, a breakdown of responses by group, ie; responses from parents, pupils, governors, school staff, Post 16 students, transport providers other staff, other. A significant majority of responses (1412) were from parents.

10. **Appendix C** provides a summary of the most common comments submitted regarding the proposals.

Key messages from the consultation on pathfinder proposals

11. In response to proposal 1(a), **89%** of replies were in favour of there being further measures to improve safety and behaviour on school transport. Some comments indicated enthusiasm for escorted journeys and or CCTV, ie; some adult supervision on buses. A number of comments reflected the need for a wide range of measures to be explored, including improved education and awareness raising about safety and bullying issues in and out of school.
12. **91%** of respondents agreed with proposal 1(b), that there should be greater promotion of bus travel, cycling and walking amongst young people. Suggestions were received regarding improved cycle training for young people, better storage facilities for cycles, improved access to cycle routes, and vehicle exclusion zones in proximity to school entrances. Some respondents requested improvements in the standard of vehicles, fitting of seat belts, and general improvement in the travel experience for young people.
13. Regarding 1(c) **91%** of replies agreed that there should be improved co-ordination of education and transport to allow additional and more flexible travel arrangements, and a number of comments reflected that this should be subject to continuous improvement as a matter of course.
14. Element 1(d) of the proposals regarding the possible introduction of charges for some children and young people to travel to school attracted most comment. **43%** of respondents agreed with the proposal to charge for home to school travel for some children who currently receive free travel. However many respondents qualified their 'Yes' response with comments about affordability, and concern about the impact on lower income families who are above the threshold for free travel. Many expressed concern about the maximum range suggested ie; up to £250 for primary age pupils, and up to £300 for secondary age pupils. Some suggested a remission scheme for siblings. **54%** of respondents were opposed to charging. A recurrent comment was that charging for travel to the catchment area school could have the effect of reducing bus travel and increasing the volume of traffic on the school run thus undermining the intention behind proposal 1(b) in relation to health and environmental issues.
15. Regarding question 1(e), **85%** of respondents were in favour of a half fare travel scheme to be introduced for all children and young people (11-19 years) in full time education, available for use on buses and trams across Nottinghamshire, which may be used at most times of the day and evening. **13%** were against the proposal. Comments were received regarding the availability of transport serving rural communities and several raised the issue of inequity in relation to cross-county border travel.

16. Overall **82%** of responses to question 2 were in favour of the basket of proposals, with **15%** against. However a number of that not in favour commented that they could support the scheme if element 1(d) re charging were to be withdrawn from the package. Similarly in relation to question 3, “*Do you think the county council should apply for Pathfinder status*”, **83%** were in favour and **14%** against, with a number of comments received to say that there would be more support were element 1(d) to be reconsidered.
17. Careful consideration has been given to all the responses and to the distribution of funds and cost issues across the lifespan of the scheme. This includes funding proposed by central government, the options available locally regarding income generation, and any possible harmonisation of LA funds. The degree of innovation and extent of the scheme are carefully balanced and must be affordable and sustainable. Following consultation and in the light of these factors, it is proposed that the scheme develops elements 1(a), 1(b) and 1(c). No changes to the current charging arrangements for home to school transport are to be proposed through Pathfinder, and whilst it remains an aspiration to introduce a concessionary travel scheme for children and young people, this should be explored through phased arrangements subject to available funding.

School Travel Pathfinder Application, Appendix D

18. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 enables up to 20 Local Authorities to propose Pathfinder Schemes to test innovative approaches to Home to School Transport. A summary of Pathfinder Guidance has previously been considered by Cabinet and Cabinet Committee. Schemes will have some compulsory and some optional features. It is a requirement that each of the following are addressed:
 - transport arrangements that support parental preference
 - transport arrangements for pupils living more than 2 miles from school
 - reducing levels of car use on the home to school journey.
19. **Appendix D** sets out the Nottinghamshire bid. In addition to innovative local developments responsive to the needs of service users in the county, the bid proposes strengthening a collegiate approach with other Local Authorities of Cheshire, Norfolk and Nottingham City, to enable good practice to be shared, and to create opportunities to derive benefit from economies of scale.
20. The key objectives of the Nottinghamshire application for Pathfinder status are to:
 - improve confidence in school transport by improving quality, and promoting further integration of school and local transport services through better coordination, eg use of community transport and taxi services
 - introduce cycling promotion into secondary schools

- promote safety in relation to all travel issues, and good behaviour amongst children and young people
 - support access and flexibility regarding the delivery of 14-19 curriculum development and extended services in and around schools
 - start to reduce public transport costs for young people
21. The application sets out in greater detail how these proposals would be taken forward.

Public Engagement Policy

22. Engagement in the Pathfinder Scheme would fall within the scope of the County Council's Public Engagement Policy.

Statutory and policy implications

23. 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. Attention is however drawn to the following:-

Personnel implications

24. Additional capacity within the LA in the form of a small project team will be required and funded jointly by central and local government to enable both the implementation of the Sustainable Transport Strategy and the Pathfinder Scheme if an application is submitted and proves successful.

Financial implications

25. Funds are being made available to all Local Authorities to support the sustainable travel duty. The formula for deployment of £4m across LAs allocates £60,000 per annum for Nottinghamshire.
26. The DCSF is making up to £12million available for up to 20 LAs for the duration of the pathfinder scheme, ie; start up or pump priming funding in 2008 / 2009, followed by funding for the implementation of schemes between September 2009 – April 2013. This is comprised of the following:
- a. Up to £200,000 per successful bid as start up funding 2008 – 2009
 - b. £1.3M for 2009 /2010, to be shared by up to 20 LAs, the proportion of this per LA will be dependent upon the detail of the proposals
 - c. £3.7M for 2010 / 2011 also across all the participating LAs
 - d. £5.1M for 2011/ 12 (as above)
 - e. £7.3M for 2012 /2013 (as above)

27. Funding available from the Local Authority to support specific strands of activity within our proposals will be in the region of £250,000 from the LTP over the 4 years of the scheme.
28. Costs of preparing the application are at the expense of the LA. Printing distribution and advertising re the consultation totalled £11,696, and research and compilation of the bid £8,880, which will be funded through efficiency savings in the Home to School Transport Budget 2007/ 2008.

Implications for service users

29. These are broadly outlined in the text of the report and Appendices

Human Rights Act implications

30. The provisions of the Equality Act 2006 and the European Convention on Human Rights are recognised throughout and in particular in sections relating to SEN and Disabilities and Religion and Belief.

RECOMMENDATION

31. That:-
 - (1) comments regarding the "Nottinghamshire Sustainable School Travel Strategy 2007 – 2011" be taken into account as part of the annual refreshment and revision of the document, July / August 2008
 - (2) the application for a School Travel Pathfinder Scheme be submitted to the DfES in November 2007

COUNCILLOR DAVID KIRKHAM

Leader of the County Council

Reasons for recommendation

32. A Sustainable School Travel Strategy is a statutory obligation of the Local Authority.
33. Given the requirements of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and opportunities nationally and locally in relation to the strategic development of school transport strategy, the Pathfinder programme presents a means of taking forward some emerging priorities for the county.
34. The feedback received from stakeholders has been broadly in favour of submitting an application, and has given some consistent messages in relation to priorities. These have been taken into account in finalising the scope and emphasis of the scheme.

Legal Services' comments (LM/30.10.2007)

35. Cabinet has the delegated power to approve the recommendations in the report. Any changes to the Home School Transport Policy may be made by Cabinet pursuant to paragraph 6.1.2 of the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.

Strategic Director of Resources' financial comments (NDR)

36. The financial implications are set out in the report.

Background papers available for inspection

Education and Inspections Act 2006
Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance, and School Travel Pathfinder Schemes Prospectus 2007 DfES
Nottinghamshire Sustainable School Travel Strategy 2007 – 2011
Responses to the consultation document "Travel to school in Nottinghamshire; a school travel pathfinder scheme"

Electoral division(s) affected

Nottinghamshire

M19C1945