



meeting	CABINET	
date	3 May 2005	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION

Provision of Support for Student Transport in Post-16 Education

Purpose of report

1. The report seeks approval for a post-16 transport scheme for the academic year 2006/07 for those Nottinghamshire students who remain in education, whether in special schools, school sixth forms or colleges of further education.

Information and advice

Background

2. The Education Act 2002 at Schedule 19 sets out the responsibilities of LAs in respect of the provision of transport for students who continue beyond Year 11 into post statutory full-time education. The provisions to be made for students under the age of 19 must be reflected in an annual policy statement, which should be published by 31 May 2006 and must satisfy the requirements as contained within Schedule 19. The provisions must be no less favourable for students attending a college of further education than the provisions made for pupils attending an LA school.
3. The policy statement should contain reference to the transport arrangements for facilitating the attendance of students requiring special transport.
4. In preparing a statement a local authority is required to consult with a number of interested parties including colleges, schools and the Learning and Skills Council. Consultation is carried out through the post-16 transport partnership, which comprises the LSC, the Local Authority, the City Council and a mix of individual sixth forms, Further Education institutions and consortia of schools and FE colleges working as Area Strategy Groups,

5. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has made funding available to all LAs in order to assist in the provision of post-16 transport with a view to widening participation and improving retention rates. Nottinghamshire LA has been offered £216,957 for 2006/07. It is likely that the DfES will make further allocations in future years although no information is as yet available. An element of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is intended to be available to meet transport costs. A student can receive an EMA of up to £30 per week dependent on parental income and regular attendance at 6th form or college.
6. After much consultation it is proposed that, for 2006-07 the scheme offered for Post-16 students should be similar to the successful scheme of the last 2 years. To qualify the student must live at least 2 radius miles (as the crow flies) away from the school or college they wish to attend. On payment of a fee of £99 the student will be able to access half price fares. A travel allowance may be offered in exceptional circumstances where no public transport or other transport services provided by the County Council exist. The maximum travel grant to an out of County establishment is £150* for the academic year 2006/07. This figure reflects the average saving to participants attending an establishment in Nottinghamshire. The scheme is set out as an Appendix to this report. The Post 16 Partnership is committed to regularly reviewing the scheme to ensure it accords with the strategic priorities of the partners and the needs of the service users.
7. The policy takes account of guidelines issued by the DfES. A copy of the guidelines is **(attached for Members only)**. The policy will have to take students individual circumstances into account before a decision is made on the type of award made.
8. For students who are identified as having special transport needs the current policy recognises this by offering further assistance to those who are under the age of 21 on 1 September; two additional years of support for those who fall within the scope of this provision. Consideration should also be given in exceptional individual circumstances for students up to the age of 25.
9. The Director of Education will require the discretion to make awards in exceptional individual circumstances relating to part-time students, students with special transport needs up to the age of 25, and those students who may have to travel long distances using expensive transport.

Statutory and policy implications

10. 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:-

Financial implications

11. The maintenance of this scheme will continue to be administered by the Environment Department who will handle payments from students and reimburse operators accordingly.

Implications for service users

12. Despite the current scheme being successful for the majority of students there are some who still experience difficulty in accessing courses. The funding from the DfES will attempt to provide a level playing field by identifying gaps in the transport network and making services more affordable and accessible to students across the County.

RECOMMENDATION

13. That:-
 - (1) the proposed scheme, as appended to this report, be approved to operate for the academic year 2006-07;
 - (2) the DfES transport allocation be used to further the aims of widening participation and improving retention rates in post-16 education with the allocation being audited by Nottinghamshire County Council.

COUNCILLOR MICHAEL STOREY

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Education

Other Options Considered

16. The Nottinghamshire Post 16 Partnership considered a range of options for providing post-16 transport. After much consultation it was agreed that, for 2006-07 academic year, the proposed scheme should be recommended to the County Council for adoption.

Legal Services' comments (LM/10.4.2006)

17. The Cabinet has delegated power under the Constitution to discharge the County Council's functions as Local Education Authority.

Director of Resources' financial comments (NDR)

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

Background papers available for inspection

- 1 Schedule 19 Education Act 2002
- 2 DFES: Transport Guidelines 2006/07

Electoral division(s) affected

Nottinghamshire

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