

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF INTRODUCING CHARGES FOR POST – 16 HOME TO
SCHOOL / COLLEGE TRANSPORT**

Report by the Corporate Director – Education

9th JANUARY 2007

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To review the impact of the Council's decision to introduce charges for post-16 Home to School / College transport from September 2006 for new students.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 At the meeting of the Executive on 10 January 2006 Members considered a report of the Corporate Director concerning the possibility of charging for post-16 transport:

- seeking support for the proposal to endorse consultations, as required by DfES advice on good practice, with all interested parties prior to making final decisions in the Spring of 2006, and,
- seeking a decision on which of the options on 'who pays' and the 'level of charge' should be the subject of consultation.

The Executive resolved:

- That the possibility of charging for post 16 transport be pursued.
- That consultations be carried out with all interested parties prior to a final decision being made in the Spring of 2006.
- That consultation be undertaken on the proposal that all students using post 16 transport facilities provided by the LEA should pay a charge equivalent to £10 per week.

A further copy of the report can be made available to members on request to Chris McGee, telephone 01609 532149 or e-mail chris.mcgee@northyorks.gov.uk.

2.2 Following the period of consultation, the Executive on 7 March 2006 considered a further report of the Corporate Director and resolved:

- That the issues raised during the consultation process, including the comments of Harrogate Borough Council be noted.

- That charges of £8 per week be introduced for home-to-school/college transport for post-16 students beginning new courses with effect from September 2006, but that the situation be evaluated and reviewed prior to the 2007/08 academic year in the hope that, at that stage, it would be possible to provide a more flexible scheme which would provide wider benefits, including travel at other times.
- That post-16 students who have Statements of Special Educational Needs which specify home to school/college transport be exempt from the charge.

A further copy of the report can be made available to members on request to Chris McGee, telephone 01609 532149 or e-mail chris.mcgee@northyorks.gov.uk.

2.3 The decision of the Executive was then called-in and considered by the Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 March 2006. The minutes of that meeting are attached as Appendix 1. The Committee resolved that:

- There is no referral of the call in of the Executive decision made at its meeting on 7 March 2006 (minute no. 185 Charges for Post 16 Home to School / College Transport).

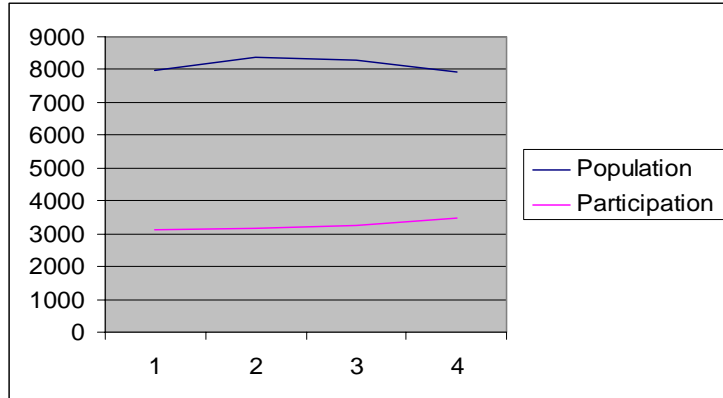
2.4 Officers then proceeded to implement the council's decisions on the matter. Charges were introduced for new students from September 2006.

3.0 EVIDENCE OF IMPACT AND OTHER CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

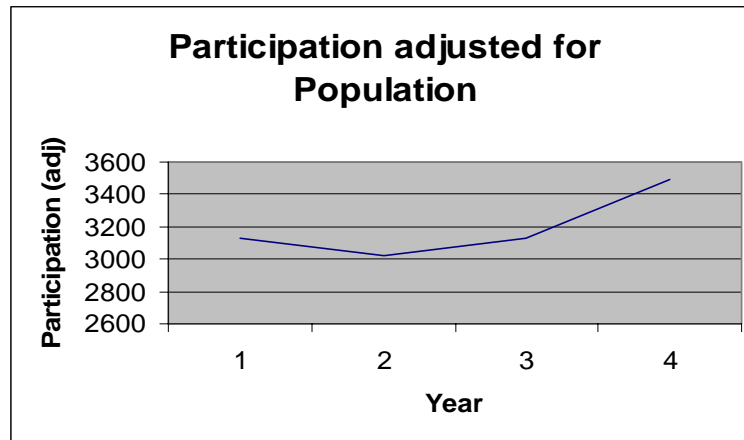
3.1 Evidence of the impact of introducing charges and other contextual information has been reviewed in a number of ways - each is the subject of a separate paragraph below.

- Information about numbers of students in year 12 in North Yorkshire schools and comparable cohort numbers is shown below:

| Year | Cohort | Y12 numbers |
|---------|------------|-------------|
| 1) 2003 | 7994 | 3125 |
| 2) 2004 | 8389 | 3174 |
| 3) 2005 | 8285 | 3244 |
| 4) 2006 | 7930 (est) | 3460 |



If Y12 numbers are adjusted in proportion to the cohort size, the trend in participation can be more clearly seen:



Reliable information about participation by 16 to 18 year olds in the further education sector was very difficult to obtain but eventually information obtained directly from the colleges themselves shows broadly similar trends:

| | 2005 | 2006 | % increase / decrease |
|--------------------------------|------|------|-----------------------|
| Craven College | 1253 | 1358 | +8.3% |
| Scarborough Sixth Form College | 962 | 995 | +3.4% |
| Selby College | 886 | 911 | + 2.8% |
| Yorkshire Coast College | 820 | 900 | +9.8% |
| Harrogate College (LMU) | 790 | 873 | +10.5% |

- The total numbers of new students applying for assistance with transport over the last three years is shown below (with numbers approved and not withdrawn up to 15 December each year also given):

| | |
|------|-------------|
| 2004 | 3284 (2895) |
| 2005 | 3223 (2731) |

2006

2232 (1828)

These figures have not been adjusted for changing cohort sizes – see below – but clearly there has been a sharp decline in applications this year. In 2005 there were 110 appeals against Officers' decisions to not approve support with transport to particular establishments. For 2006 this has reduced to 50 (to date).

- The net fee income projections for 06/07 are broadly as described in the reports to the Executive in January and March being just 1.5% under the budget figure of £300K.
- Some 4414 young people are currently receiving EMAs in North Yorkshire and although no definite information is available for the current year on the split between those receiving different amounts per week is currently available best estimates suggest that it is broadly comparable to 2005/06:

| | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| £30 | £20 | £10 |
| 73.1% | 13.3% | 13.6% |

- As part of this evaluation, we have written to all schools and colleges in the county (and a number of out-of-county colleges that receive large numbers of North Yorkshire students). Only six responses were received and copies are attached as Appendix 2. Four schools commented on the perceived barriers of introducing charges but two of them acknowledged that their numbers had increased this year. One out-of-county college accepted that there had been “no negative impact on participation”. One school indicated that whilst their numbers overall had increased the numbers recruited “from other schools” had decreased. No schools or colleges commented about increased traffic problems. In addition, this issue was an item on the agenda of a recent meeting of the Learning Partnership's Learner Support Group (attended by representatives of all colleges, Connexions and the LSC). The minute of the meeting is attached as Appendix 3.
- Students with special needs are exempt from these charges – 29 students have been assisted so far this year. Members asked that we give particular attention to young carers and others with particular needs and so the application form was designed to allow any applicant to indicate if they had particular needs that should be taken into account. To date 14 youngsters who are Looked After and 2 Young carers have been granted free transport.
- Members asked that progress should be made in negotiating more flexible (all day) bus passes with some companies. Officers are continuing to try to negotiate more flexible (all day) bus passes with some companies but with limited success. Some improvements were made in Selby last year and students in some parts of Harrogate & Scarborough can already benefit by buying a pass from the bus operator rather than paying NYCC £300. Darlington and parts of Harrogate (for longer distance passengers) remain without such flexibility because the local bus networks for outlying areas do not have the peak capacity to cope with student numbers. Richard Owens, Assistant Director, (Integrated Passenger Transport), will be attending the meeting to provide further information for members.

- The reports to the Executive in January and March compared NYCC's position in 2005/06 with 15 other shire counties. At that time, Durham, Lincolnshire and Cumbria also offered free post-16 transport. The average annual charge was £232, the highest was £300 (Gloucestershire and Somerset) and the lowest was £148 (Shropshire). The information has been updated for 2006/7 and it can be seen that Lincolnshire introduced a charge for 2006/07 (of £180), the average charge is now £261, the highest is £360 (Somerset and now Northumberland) and the lowest is £152 (still Shropshire). NYCC's current charge of £300 ranks 6th highest of the 16 shire counties.

| Charges in Similar Shire Counties 2005/6 and 2006/2007 | | | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| LEA | 2005/2006 | 2006/2007 | Increase | % Increase |
| Cambridgeshire | £279 | £300 | £21 | 8% |
| Cheshire | £250 | £315 | £65 | 26% |
| Cornwall | £200 | £225 | £25 | 13% |
| Cumbria | £0 | £0 | £0 | 0% |
| Devon | £240 | £240 | £0 | 0% |
| Dorset | £184 | £190 | £6 | 3% |
| Gloucestershire | £300 | £310 | £10 | 3% |
| Lincolnshire | £0 | £180 | £180 | 0% |
| Norfolk | £205 | £220 | £15 | 7% |
| Northumberland | £220 | £360 | £140 | 64% |
| Shropshire | £148 | £152 | £4 | 3% |
| Somerset | £300 | £360 | £60 | 20% |
| Suffolk | £261 | £336 | £75 | 29% |
| Warwickshire | £175 | £200 | £25 | 14% |
| Wiltshire | £250 | £270 | £20 | 8% |
| AVERAGE | £232 | £261 | £29 | 13% |
| HIGH | £300 | £360 | £60 | 20% |
| LOW | £148 | £152 | £4 | 3% |

Durham has indicated it will be reviewing its policy for 2007/2008 and Cumbria will also be doing so for 2008/2009.

3.2 Conclusions

The introduction of charges for post-16 home to school / college transport was a very sensitive issue. There was real concern that charges would act as a barrier to participation and the number of students entering post-16 education would fall. The evidence presented above suggests that these fears have not been realised.

Participation has increased (despite the size of the cohort falling). Only two similar authorities do now not make charges and both have expressed their intentions to review their policies in the near future.

4.0 CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

This issue relates to the following Corporate Objectives:

| | |
|--|---|
| Security for All – by promoting safe, healthy and sustainable communities. | ✓ |
| Growing up prepared for the future – through good education and care and protection when it is needed | ✓ |
| Independence – through employment, opportunity and appropriate support | ✓ |
| Keeping us on the move – with good roads and a safe and reliable transport system | ✓ |
| Strengthening our economy – by supporting business, developing our infrastructure, investing in powerful telecommunications and helping people improve their skills | ✓ |
| Looking after our heritage and our environment – in our countryside and our towns and villages | ✓ |
| Keeping in touch – by listening to your views, planning to meet your needs and by telling you what we are doing. | ✓ |

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the report be noted.

Report prepared by Chris McGee, Assistant Director, (Learning, Youth and Skills)

Cynthia Welbourn, Corporate Director for the Children and Young People's Service

December 2006

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 17 March 2006 at County Hall, Northallerton.

PRESENT:-

County Councillor Heather Garnett (in the Chair).

County Councillors:- Michelle Andrew, Andrew Backhouse, John Blackburn, Elizabeth Casling, John Fletcher, Tony Hall, Ron Haigh, Bill Houtt (as substitute for David Heather), Stuart Parsons, Caroline Seymour, Jim Snowball (as substitute for Brian Simpson) and Melva Steckles

In attendance Councillors Geoffrey Cullern, Herbert Tindall and John Wren.

Executive Member:- County Councillor John Watson (Children's Services).

Officers:- Stephanie Bratcher, Chris McGee, Richard Owens, Cynthia Welbourn and Jane Wilkinson.

Three members of the public.

COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED ARE IN THE MINUTE BOOK

33. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That subject to the following amendment the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2006, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record:-

Minute No 32 – Resolution (iv) the words “visit schools” to be deleted and replaced with “consult with young people”.

34. PUBLIC QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS

The Committee was advised that no notice had been received of any public questions or statements to be made at the meeting.

35. CALL-IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION RELATING TO CHARGES FOR POST-16 HOME TO SCHOOL/COLLEGE TRANSPORT

CONSIDERED -

The report of the Head of Committee Services seeking the response of the Committee to the call-in of the Executive decision relating to charges for post-16 home to school/college transport, together with a letter from the Chair of Selby District Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee, setting out concerns surrounding the consultation process, urging the County Council not to introduce such charges.

The Chairman, with the approval of Committee outlined the order of the meeting as recommended in the County Council's scrutiny protocols.

County Councillor John Watson OBE outlined the background and context of the Executive decision. He emphasised that the County Council was one of only four local authorities in the country that provided free transport to all post 16 students and that the County Council was committed to encouraging young people to stay on in further education. Under the current system Council Tax payers in urban areas in effect subsidised the transport costs of those student living in rural areas. The cost of home to school transport in North Yorkshire was one of the highest in the country which reflected the rural nature of the County. Initially the proposal had been to introduce a £10 per week charge, but following consultation the charge was reduced to £8 per week. Even with the introduction of an £8.00 per week charge the County Council would have to heavily subsidise the cost of home to school transport. There was no evidence to suggest that the introduction of such a charge would act as a disincentive to students who wished to stay on in further education. He admitted that in some instances there would be hardship but eligibility for Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) would assist those students with the greatest need. He believed it was impossible to say with any certainty whether traffic levels would increase as a result of the introduction of the charge. He reminded the Committee that 60% of school children in North Yorkshire lived within a 3-mile radius of their school and were therefore not eligible for free school transport. Of those students that remained some would qualify for Education Maintenance Allowance and some would continue to use the bus or drive themselves to college. If deductions were made for all of these groups then the number of students directly affected by the introduction of the charge was relatively low.

The Executive had resolved to introduce a charge of £8 per week with effect from September 2006 on the basis that the situation was to be evaluated and reviewed prior to 2007/08 to see if greater flexibility could be built in to the scheme. Post-16 students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs that specified home to school/college transport were exempted from the charge. County Councillor John Watson was keen that the review would consider the Somerset model and the position of young carers. He was fully supportive of the decision made by the Executive.

Cynthia Welbourn the Corporate Director – Education Service, outlined the budget context in which the Executive decision had been taken. She stressed that even with the introduction of the charge the home to school transport service available in North Yorkshire remained one of the best in the country.

On behalf of the signatories to the call in, County Councillor Caroline Seymour referred to the reasons for the call in set out in the report and in addition, made the following points:-

- That the decision was discriminatory against students from rural areas who had limited access to employment opportunities as a means of supplementing their income. As transport costs in rural areas were also higher then a greater proportion of a rural student's EMA would be used to cover their transport costs as opposed to their urban counterpart. The same argument applied to access to research materials eg libraries.
- That 70% of post 16 students in North Yorkshire did not qualify for EMA and those whose parents income was just over the eligibility threshold would be hit the hardest.
- Sustainability was a core objective of North Yorkshire County Council. The introduction of the charge would increase the number of car journeys at a time

when the County Council was already heavily subsidising empty seats on buses.

- Consultation – The report identified significant opposition to the introduction of the charge.
- Corporate Objectives – The decision conflicted with all of the County Council's corporate objectives and would ultimately damage the economy in North Yorkshire as skill levels would decrease as some students would elect not to continue with their education.
- Costs – The monies spent administering the charge would be significant and could be put to better use.
- DfES Post-16 Guidance recommended that the amount of money students spent on transport costs did not exceed a third of their EMA. The introduction of an £8 per week charge was not in line with this Guidance.

County Councillor Stuart Parsons addressed the meeting explaining why he supported the call-in. He believed that the introduction of the charge did not support rural communities who, generally speaking, had less access to services than urban areas. Some students would have no option other than to walk to college over difficult terrain that was often unlit.

The Chairman next provided an opportunity for the Corporate Director to respond to the comments made. The Corporate Director did not deny the rural nature of the County. Significant resources had been committed to ensure that rural areas had local accessible services. The County Council spent millions of pounds in excess of other local authorities in order to provide access to education for all students. She stressed that the County Council at no time previously had a policy of free transport provision to all post-16 students. Every year the County Council processed many transport appeals. She believed that the introduction of the charge would not restrict student choice. As for the charge being discriminatory, she believed that some students who were able to walk to college, and who were eligible for EMA would continue to use buses/cars to get to and from college. She reminded the Committee that the purpose of EMA was to assist students with transport costs. The Corporate Director doubted whether the viability of some courses would be affected by the introduction of the charge. She was mindful of the potential environmental impact more car journeys would have, but did not foresee a dramatic increase. She concluded by saying that unless the charge was implemented other parts of the education service would suffer.

The Chairman next invited Members of the Committee to comment/ask questions. County Councillor Tony Hall stated that during the course of the consultation he had attended many meetings on the subject and had been given plenty of opportunity to express his views. The evidence presented was overwhelming and he did not believe the consultation process to be flawed. He welcomed the decision of the Executive to preclude students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs and by the decision of the Executive to conduct a review into the needs of young carers.

County Councillor Stuart Parsons suggested that the introduction of the charge was postponed until the results of the review were known. In response the Corporate Director reported that the introduction of the charge was driven by budget pressures. EMA was designed to encourage post-16 student participation in education. In response to a series of questions from Members, the Corporate Director responded to questions on the following areas:-

- Student choice

- Student participation rates
- The consultation process
- The publication of school prospectus containing incorrect transport information
- The role of the County Council's Area Committees
- Guidance issued by the DfES.

The Chairman then invited the Corporate Director, followed by the signatories to sum up their respective arguments. The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions on what had been an open, frank and comprehensive discussion that had provided everyone with an opportunity to express their personal views.

RESOLVED –

- 1, That there is no referral of the call in of the Executive decision made at its meeting on 7 March 2006 (minute No 185 Charges for Post 16 Home to School/College Transport).

Responses To Post-16 Consultation

The following e-mail was sent out to all North Yorkshire secondary schools, special schools, FE colleges plus Askham Bryan College, York College, Queen Elizabeth's Sixth Form College, Darlington College and Bishop Burton College on 3 and 6 November 2006.

As you know, NYCC introduced charges for post-16 home to school / college transport for new students from September 2006. When the decision was taken to introduce the charges, members were keen to monitor the impact of their decisions and, to that end, Officers will be reporting to the Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 December 2006. We are currently gathering together information for this report (including comparisons of the numbers of year 12 students attending schools and colleges this year compared to the last few years) but we would also like to include any comments from Heads / Principals. If you would like to contribute please send your comments to kevin.tharby@northyorks.gov.uk as soon as possible (and certainly no later than 24 November 2006).

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Ripon College | <p>I am responding to the email sent to schools on 3 November by Chris McGee in respect to P16 transport charges.</p> <p>The College traditionally takes 2 -3 students a year from out of traditional catchment who join our 6th Form because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mix of vocational courses we offer Access to occupational courses Seeking a small 6th Form environment, due to particular individual need. <p>This year we have two students who fall in this category. One a Y12 Kosovan refugee, travelling in from Knaresborough and the other a Y13 coming in from Darlington.</p> <p>Whilst the latter is not affected by transport charges this year the Y12 is seeking LSF grant, due to financial constraints within the family.</p> <p>We do have a concern that 'non traditional' sixth formers looking for a non traditional course package here at the College may be dissuaded from study in future due to these charges.</p> <p>Paul Lowery Ripon College</p> |
| Darlington College | <p>The charge has had no negative impact on participation. Their enrolment numbers have been exceeded. Some parents are refusing to pay and students still using the bus but recently some have not been allowed to travel.</p> <p>Is there any facility for students to pay on a daily basis. They have some students on placement who only go to college 3 days a week and also some part time students attending one day a week</p> |
| Boroughbridge High School | <p>I think it is sad that we are putting barriers in the way of students continuing in education at least until they are 18. The benefits of the EMA certainly do not outweigh the disadvantages of the transport costs. Obviously we will have to wait and see what effects this has on the numbers of students staying on, but by then it will be too late for some.</p> <p>Elaine Dixon</p> |

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <p>South Craven School</p> | <p>Dear Kevin</p> <p>When asked to comment on the charges our experience has been a negative experience. In 2005 173 recruited, 39 from other schools i.e. they had to travel. In 2006 206 recruited only 19 from other schools i.e. they are put off by the charges!</p> <p>Regards Roy Roy Burgin</p> |
| <p>Springwater School</p> | <p>As far as we are aware Post 16 pupils in Special Schools do not have to pay for their school transport.</p> <p>Heather Forge Office Manager Springwater School</p> |
| <p>Sherburn High School</p> | <p>Chris McGee sent an e-mail asking for comments about the post 16 transport costs. To be honest any comments are purely anecdotal and not based on any rigorous evidence. Our post 16 numbers have risen slightly, but this is not due to anything other than good GCSE results which have boosted the numbers of A level students. There was much talk about transport costs to college but we have no evidence more staying in our 'semi rural' sixth form as a result. I have heard that bus companies are not enforcing the new levy and some post 16 students are still not paying. Of course this may be complicated by the fact that those part way through a programme of study (i.e. year 13) do not have to pay whilst year 12 do.</p> <p>Carl Sugden Head – Sherburn High School.</p> |

MEETING OF THE LEARNER SUPPORT STEERING GROUP

THURSDAY 9th November 2006

HELD IN ASHFIELD HOUSE, ROOM AH001, YORK COLLEGE

Present:

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Paul Guilfoyle | York College |
| Kevin Tharby | NYCC Learning, Youth and Skills |
| Glenn Miller | York College |
| Michelle Mitton | LSC |
| Janet Smales | Selby College |
| Hilary Thornley | City of York Council |
| Sue Knight | Harrogate College |
| Judy Long | NYCC Learning, Youth and Skills |
| Karen Thornton | Yorkshire Coast College |
| Elizabeth Wallace | Queen Elizabeth's Sixth Form College |
| Peter Jinks | LSC National Office |
| Maggie Wray | Scarborough Sixth Form College |
| Jos Mortimer | Connexions York and North Yorkshire |
| Linda Hardwick | YMCA Training NY |

1 Apologies:

| | |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Jill Ellis | Askham Bryan College |
| Chris McGee | NYCC Learning, Youth and Skills |
| Peter Cole | NYLP |
| Rowan Johnson | Scarborough Sixth Form College |
| Carly Walker | Teenage Pregnancy |
| Christine Bailey | Craven College |
| David Ewing | Malton School |
| Michelle Oliver | Intuitions |
| Mark Ellis | City of York Council |
| Katrina Hampton | Yorkshire Coast College |

2 Minutes

The notes of the meeting held on 18th May 2006 were agreed.

3 Matters Arising

None

4 Post -16 Transport Charge – North Yorkshire

Kevin Tharby provided an account of how the introduction of a post-16 transport charge had gone identifying some of the problems encountered and the lessons learnt. For 2007/2008 it is planned that applications for transport assistance will be distributed to students via schools and colleges. Around 80% of all applicants had chosen to pay by direct debit. Of these around 150 failed due to incorrect details provided, wrong accounts and insufficient funds. It had also been discovered that a number of students had subsequently cancelled their direct debit instruction to the bank. These students were being pursued for payment and invoices raised.

Exceptions to the charge had been made for looked after children, young carers and special needs students whose statement includes a transport requirement.

Currently a report for Members is in the process of being put together to provide details of the implications of the charge. All schools and colleges have been asked to provide feedback by the 24th November.

Early indications are that post-16 numbers do not appear to have gone down although the number of students applying for transport assistance is down by around 25%.

Paul Guilfoyle enquired as to how the transport charge had impacted on the NEET group. Jos Mortimer has provided the following information:

- Connexions York and North Yorkshire are working with partners to meet the North Yorkshire NEET target of 4.4% by the end of November 2006. Analysis through October 2006 shows positive progress towards achieving the 4.4% target
- Some areas have already achieved over and above (end of October data) for example Ryedale 3.97%, Craven 3.04%. Other areas are progressing well: Harrogate 5.47%, Richmondshire 5.49%, Selby 5.75%, Scarborough 6.5%, Hambleton 5.53%
- Year 11 destination data has been collected and with a detailed analysis will be disseminated to partners in January 2007. Year 12 and 13 data is being collected and the analysis shared in March 2007.

Jos also pointed out that there are a number of reasons why young people choose not to participate in education, employment or training and it would be very difficult to measure the impact of the post-16 transport charge in isolation.

Colleagues from the FE colleges were asked for their views.

Scarborough Sixth Form College – a number of students had complained. The college had noticed that recruitment from the Filey area was significantly lower.

Yorkshire Coast College – many students had complained about the charge. The college had introduced a similar charge for the bus they run into Bridlington.

Selby College – similarly many students had complained particularly those students progressing from a 1 year programme on to a two year programme. No formal complaints had been made though. Many students had chosen alternative forms of transport. It was also felt that the transport charge was hard for those students who only received an EMA payment of £10 per week.

Harrogate College – many students had chosen to make their own transport arrangements. In Harrogate students can purchase a student pass for £2 which entitles them to ½ price travel.

Queen Elizabeth's Sixth Form College – they were not aware of any particular problems. The college had introduced their own bus service to Bedale and students were paying £600 per year.

York College – again confirmed that many students make their own transport arrangements and pay on an ad hoc basis. This is particularly relevant to students who are only required to attend 3 or 4 days a week. The college also pointed out that they had made some applications to a charity based around Kirkbymoorside which may provide travel assistance. The college had a number of problems with students wishing to study A level courses which are not available at Selby College. Students had also pointed out that as they were paying £300 for a travel pass they should have a choice as to where they study. It was also pointed out that the Learner Support Fund could not be used in many cases to provide transport assistance.

The group also highlighted that there were a wide range of discounts and subsidies offered by different operators and that there should be some consistency across the county.

The group also asked that an exception be made for students on very low incomes. The City of York uses the working families tax credit threshold of £14,155. It was pointed out that in many cases the EMA for students from these families was often used to supplement the household budget.

5 City of York Transport Update

Hilary Thornley confirmed that they currently provide free bus passes to around 200 students. These students qualify as their household income is less than £14,155 the working families tax credit threshold. The post-16 transport fund allocation received from the LSC is used very successfully for independent travel training. This has been so successful the council are now providing their own funds to supplement the scheme.

Hilary is also in the process of establishing a cycle loan scheme for students.

6 Care to Learn Update

In Carly Walker's absence Kevin Tharby advised that students who are 19 years of age will continue to receive the Care to Learn grant for the duration of their course. Care to Learn numbers have continued to rise. Detailed figures provided by Carly are attached to the minutes.

7 Education Maintenance Allowances

Michelle Mitton explained that following the LSC restructure there is no dedicated Learner Support Fund Co-ordinator and that she is leading on these issues. Michelle does however, have access to regional and national experts for particular issues and that any queries or concerns should be directed to her.

Michelle confirmed that EMA take up was running at 108% across the North Yorkshire area. Michelle also provided an up to date breakdown of the EMA bands for North Yorkshire. These are £30 = 73.1%, £20 = 13.3% and £10 = 13.6%

Overall EMA expenditure in North Yorkshire was £3.6 million for 2005/2006.

Administration funding for 2006/2007 has been confirmed at £25 per EMA learner. Colleagues were keen to find out about arrangements for 2008/2008. Michelle will make enquiries with National Office.

8 Learner Support Funds

Michelle advised that across the Yorkshire and Humberside region there was an overall under spend of £700K. In North Yorkshire the under spend was £62K although some providers had overspent. It is possible that the under spend may be used to reimburse these providers.

A number of FE colleagues pointed out that as the reduction in LSF for 2005/2006 had been so great they had been cautious in how it was administered.

Glenn Miller from York College pointed out that getting approval from the LSC for residential bursaries had been particularly difficult this year although North Yorkshire LSC was the exception.

9 Adult Learning Grant

Peter Jinks from the LSC National Office gave an overview of ALG. In Yorkshire and Humberside we are doing very well in terms of take up of ALG.

Manchester City Council are working flat out to cope with the increase in numbers. Elizabeth Wallace from Queen Elizabeth's Sixth Form College pointed out that they had had problems obtaining ALG application forms. Peter confirmed that a further print run is underway.

The ALG policy is currently being reviewed in readiness for the national roll out next year. It is possible that ALG application dates and banding levels may mirror those for EMA's.

The processing of all forms of learner support is currently out to tender. It is likely that in future years there will be one provider who carries out the administration for all applications for EMA, ALG, Dance and Drama awards, residential bursaries, Care to Learn.

Promotional materials for the national roll out of ALG will be made available for local campaigns.

9 Any Other Business

Karen Thornton from Yorkshire Coast College asked whether there were any national or local statistics regarding retention and achievement for those students who access learner support funds. Michelle Mitton will make enquiries.

Jos Mortimer, Connexions advised that Deborah Hamilton has been employed by NYBEP to oversee the publication of the county wide 14-19 prospectus for 2007/2008 and that advice on learner support should be included.

10 Date And Time Of Next Meeting

Thursday 15 March 2007 2.00pm at York College.