

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE
CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S MEETING WITH EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

13 FEBRUARY 2009

REVIEW OF CHARGES FOR POST-16 STUDENTS

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek Executive Member endorsement to the review of charges for home to school transport.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Authority introduced charges for Post-16 Transport in 2006. The charge was initially fixed at £300 per student. The charges were last reviewed a year ago at which time it was decided to increase the charges, from September 2008, by 5% to the current charge of £315 per annum.

3.0 HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT – CHARGES FOR POST-16 STUDENTS

3.1 In considering the prospective increase in charges it is clearly essential to take account of changes in transport costs over the last 12 months. Whilst a few months ago the indications were that there would be a very significant year on year increase in home to school transport costs to reflect inflation. This is against a background where most of our home to school transport contracts are automatically adjusted, using an index, to cover inflationary changes. However the recent reduction in fuel prices means that the anticipated year on year increase is now of the order of 3%. A 3% increase in charges would involve an increase in the annual charge from £315 to £325. The current annual income from such charges is anticipated to be of the order of £600K and therefore a 3% increase, in a full year, would attract extra income of £18K.

3.2 Despite the increase in post-16 students there has been a decline in the applications for transport assistance. The number of post-16 students applying for transport fell from 4,569 in the 2005/06 academic year, which was prior to the introduction of a transport charge, to 3,229 in the 2006/07 academic year, where the transport charge applied to Year 12 students only, reducing to 2,383 students in the 2007/08 academic year, when the transport charge applied to Years 12 and 13. The number of applicants appear to have stabilised now and for the current academic year there was a slight increase of applications to 2,427, despite the increase in the charge from £300 to £315. The most significant reason for this reduction is that, in the more urban parts of the County, particularly Scarborough, Selby and Harrogate, students are finding alternative ways of using public transport, including discount offers made by public transport operators, to get to and from school at a net lower cost than the purchase of a termly or annual concession from the Authority. It is clearly helpful to students that these facilities are available although the Integrated Passenger Transport Unit continues to work with operators to ensure not only effective co-ordination of provision of public transport with the "home to school transport network".

3.3 A proportion of students have, since 2004, had the benefit of Education Maintenance Allowances which were introduced, in part, to enable students to meet the cost of transport. The amounts payable under the EMA scheme have remained unchanged

at £30, £20 or £10 per week since their introduction together with the facility for the student, if they achieve his/her learning target, to receive up to 4 bonuses of £100 each over a 2 year course.

- 3.4 Education Maintenance Allowances were introduced in 2004. They are assessed each year on a means tested basis. The income thresholds did not increase until the 2007/08 academic year and remain the same for the current academic year. At present no decision has been made as to whether the income threshold will increase for the 2009/10 academic year.
- 3.5 Executive Members are asked to endorse a 3% increase in home to school transport charges with effect from September 2009. As in previous years students will be able to pay this charge in 9 monthly instalments.
- 3.6 The Authority also provides the opportunity for non-entitled children and students to take-up vacant "concessionary" seats on transport provided for those children and students who are eligible for free transport. It is also recommended that these concessionary charges be also increased by 3% with effect from April 2009.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Executive Members are asked to endorse

- (a) an increase in the post-16 transport from £315 per annum to £325 per annum with an equivalent increase in termly passes;
- (b) an increase of 3% in the concessionary charges made for non-entitled scholars to travel on home to school transport provided by the Authority;

CYNTHIA WELBOURN
CORPORATE DIRECTOR – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE

Report prepared by George Bateman, Assistant Director – Finance & Management Support

GCB/DAW
4.2.09

ConsultedExecutive Member

Date: 13 February 2009

ConsultedExecutive Member

Date: 13 February 2009

Agreed:Corporate Director

Date: 13 February 2009