

North Yorkshire Council

REPORT TO THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

28 April 2026

Home to School Travel Contribution Fees Academic Year 2026-27

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide recommendations on: -

- Home to School Travel contribution charges for the academic year 2026/27; and
- The continuation of the provision of a 50% discount to pupils and students from low income families.

1.2 To provide a summary of the current terms and conditions associated with the purchase of a paid for permit.

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 This report details the current level of home to school travel contribution charges recommends that the Corporate Director agrees that the charge should increase by 3.4% to £846 for the financial year 2026/27.

2.2 The report also details the Terms and Conditions associated with the use of home to school travel utilising a paid permit and recommends that the current terms and conditions continue to be utilised unamended.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Home to School Travel contribution charges are currently levied in respect of

- Post 16 Home to School Travel; and
- Paid travel permits, which are made available to purchase in respect of spare capacity in existing dedicated transport provided for eligible pupils

3.2 There are currently: -

- Approx 650 students who are eligible for, and who utilise, Post 16 Home to School Travel; and
- 623 pupils who have a paid travel permit

3.3 Arising from a previous review of the Council's Home to School Transport Policy in 2018, it was agreed that the two Home to School Transport contribution charges should be aligned, and this was subsequently achieved with effect from the academic year 2023-24.

3.4 In 2019, following the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s consideration of a proposed increase to the contribution charges, a recommendation was made that annual inflationary increases should be applied to the charge in accordance with the Corporate Fees and Charges policy.

- 3.5 The main expectations of the Corporate fees and charges policy are as follows:-
- Unless limited by Statute, fees and charges must be uplifted by the relevant inflation that the fees and charges relate to (finance would calculate the inflation rate specific to the relevant cost base)
 - There must be a review of opportunities to introduce new fees and charges
 - Fees and charges must be at full cost recovery including corporate and departmental overheads (unless limited by Statute as above)
 - If it is not possible to charge/ uplift to a minimum of full cost recovery, then the service should be discontinued
 - There must be clear benchmarking of fees and charges against other local authorities/ providers/ competitors that evidence why the recommended fees and charges are proposed.

3.6 The table below shows the annual charges that have been made since the academic year 2020-21: -

	2020/21	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Post 16	£600	£618	£650	£747.50	£792	£818
Paid Permit	£490	£550	£600	£747.50	£792	£818

3.7 Appendix A provides information about the equivalent charges that are made by other, similar local authorities.

4.0 Background

4.1 Home to school travel is a complex issue within North Yorkshire, including for: -

- Post 16 students, noting that students are required to remain in education, employment or training until the age of 18; and
- Pupils who are of statutory school age but who have chosen to attend a school other than one for which they would be eligible to receive assistance with home to school travel.

4.2 The geographical profile of the county represents a challenge for some pupils and students. With the exception of those that are situated in the larger towns in the county, schools and further education providers are not typically served by regular public transport services.

4.3 A number of schools within the county, and further education providers both within and outside of North Yorkshire provide subsidised and / or paid for transport services to enable pupils and students to attend their establishments.

These are provided at a range of different costs to parents, examples include the following schools within North Yorkshire, who charge the annual fees indicated: -

Harrogate Grammar School (Sixth Form) - £820 - £935, dependent upon route
 Malton School - £450 - £600, dependent upon distance

Richmond School	- £1,140 - £1,145 dependent upon distance
St Francis Xavier School, Richmond	- £845.50 - £1,178 dependent upon distance
Upper Wharfedale School	- £1130

The following are examples of colleges who provide transport to North Yorkshire students: -

York College	- Up to £1296, dependent upon route
Askham Bryan College	- Up to £807.30 dependent upon route

4.4 However, a significant number of applications for post 16 transport continue to be from students who are attending specific provision which is not local to them or accessible via alternative means.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 The Council's expenditure in respect of Home to School Travel for the financial year 2024-25 was £50.51 million. This represents a 74% increase in the period since the financial year 2021-2022. It is currently estimated that the expenditure during the financial year 2025-26 will be £52.52 million.

5.2 The income arising from the contribution charges represent a contribution towards the overall cost of transport and does not cover the full cost of service delivery for the eligible pupils / students.

5.3 The table below details the income achieved from Home to School Travel contributions during the 5 years from 2020-21 to 2024-25: -

Academic year	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Contribution income	£416,040	£514,499	£553,791	£577,817	£642,857

5.4 In determining the charge, consideration is required to be provided to the level of discount that should be provided for pupils / students from low-income families. The council currently offers a 50% discount utilising the DfE's statutory guidance in respect of extended rights for home to school travel to define the eligibility criteria. Appendix B sets out the criteria.

5.5 The level of discount that is offered to pupils / students from low-income families differs between local authorities, and ranges from no discount to a 100% reduction. This report includes a recommendation that the council should continue to offer a 50% reduction

5.6 The Council's Fees and Charges policy notes that, 'it is considered that as a minimum the fees and charges already charged by the Council are to be adjusted in line with inflation each year'. However, the policy requires that Corporate Directors review fees and charges annually, taking account of a number of factors, including: -

- Inflationary pressures; and
- Service-level budget targets

5.7 Guidance issued by the Director of Resources in respect of fees and charges for the financial year 2026-27 is that they should rise by a minimum of 3.4%

5.8 An increase in the contribution fee of 3.4% for 2026-27 academic year would result in the contribution charge being £846 per year for both Post 16 and paid permits (£423 where the 50% discount is applied).

5.9 Since December 2022, the government has been operating a programme to encourage public bus travel in which a cap was agreed with participating operators, including operators in North Yorkshire. During the financial year 2025-26 the cap for single bus fares is £3.

6.0 Paid Travel Permits – Terms and Conditions

6.1 A copy of the Terms and Conditions associated with the paid travel permits is attached at Appendix C

6.2 The criteria via which pupils are eligible for assistance with home to school travel are defined in the Council's Home to School Travel Policy. The majority of the council's home to school travel arrangements for eligible pupils and Post 16 students are established prior to the commencement of each school year, and any spare capacity is made available to pupils via a paid permit.

6.3 The Terms and Conditions provide the ability for the council to withdraw the permit through the provision of one week's notice. The permits can be withdrawn for a number of reasons, including: -

- If the allocated seat is required for a pupil who is eligible for assistance with home to school travel; or
- If a reduction in vehicle capacity is required during the course of an academic year

6.4 A change to this aspect of the Terms and Conditions could potentially have the following effects: -

- Additional costs could be incurred if additional transport was required to be commissioned to meet the needs of a pupil who was eligible for assistance with home to school travel and who could otherwise be accommodated with existing commissioned transport. The extent of the additional cost would be subject to provision requirements and the outcome of a procurement exercise.
- Savings arising from a reduction in vehicle capacity on an individual route may be delayed if the larger vehicle continues to be available for pupils with paid for permits.

6.5 This report recommends that the Terms and Conditions for paid permits are maintained in their current form, but that the number of permits that are withdrawn annually are monitored via the Home to School Transport Board.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Council has a statutory responsibility under Section 508B of the Education Act 1996 to make such travel arrangements as they consider necessary to facilitate attendance at school for 'eligible' children. Where transport is provided then this is required to be free of charge.

7.2 Schedule 35B of the Education Act defines eligible children as those categories of children of compulsory school age (5-16).

7.3 The Council is able to use discretionary powers to provide travel assistance to students over the compulsory school age. These arrangements do not have to be provided free of charge.

- 7.4 Whilst Post 16 provision is beyond the statutory school age, the Council has a duty to publish an annual Transport statement outlining what the authority will offer in terms of assistance by 31st May for the next academic year.
- 7.5 The Council may ask learners and their parents for a contribution to transport costs when exercising their discretion to assist, however they should: -
- ensure that any contribution is affordable for learners and their parents.
 - ensure that there are arrangements in place to support those families on low income.
 - consider the likely duration of learning and ensure that transport policies do not adversely affect particular groups.
- 7.6 The DfE published Statutory Guidance for home to school travel for children of compulsory school age in June 2023 and updated that guidance in January 2024.
- 7.7 The DfE indicated an intention to publish updated guidance in respect of Post-16 home to school travel during 2024. This is, however, still awaited.
- 7.8 The Council agreed that it would not make any significant changes to the Post-16 Policy Statement until the DfE's guidance is published.
- 7.9 The DfE last published guidance for Post 16 Transport in January 2019. The Council's current policy is compliant with the legislation and current guidance.

PSVAR

- 7.10 In April 2022 operators and LA's received information from the Department for Transport (DfT) regarding the launch of medium-term exemptions from the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR).
- 7.11 From 1 July 2022, the medium-term exemptions replaced the previous system of short-term exemptions for Home to School (HTS) and Rail Replacement (RR) services. These exemptions were qualified exemptions that required operators to take specific steps to make their HTS and RR fleet progressively more compliant with PSVAR within a specified timeframe, while allowing essential HTS and RR services to continue operating. The exemptions will be valid until 31 July 2026.
- 7.12 All contracted operators have confirmed that they have received exemption certificates from the DfT. This means that they have agreed to meet the requirements of the new medium term exemption guidance, and the Council were able to charge for services are provided.

8.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken and is attached to this report at Appendix D
- 8.2 The assessment identifies that the provision of both Post 16 travel and access to home to school travel for pupils who are not eligible for assistance under the terms of the Home to School Travel policy are discretionary services and represents a commitment by the council to support young people in accessing education.
- 8.3 The assessment identifies that any increase in the contribution charge has a disproportionate effect upon young people and their families, and also upon people from rural communities.

The impact upon people from rural communities is mitigated through the application of the standard charge that applies irrespective of the distance travelled.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 An initial climate change impact assessment form has been completed in respect of this report.
- 9.2 No climate change implications are anticipated to arise, but this will be monitored via the Council's Home to School Transport Board

10.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 10.1 The Council's arrangements for home to school travel enable it to fulfil its statutory responsibilities. Through continued discretionary provision, including the provision of Post 16 travel and paid permits, the council assists in providing young people with access to education.
- 10.2 The council's expenditure in respect of home to school travel has increased significantly during recent financial years and it is estimated that the expenditure during the financial year 2025-26 will have amounted to £52.52 million. Revenue arising from the sale of paid travel permits is utilised as a contribution towards the costs incurred by the Council in the provision of home to school travel and, in accordance with the Fees and Charges Policy it is recommended that the contribution rate is increased by 3.4% to £846.
- 10.3 The Terms and Conditions associated with the use of the paid permits, and specifically the provision that enables the withdrawal of a permit, assist the council in maximising the efficiency with which transport is provided when either: -
- In year school admissions result in additional pupils becoming eligible for assistance with home to school travel; or
 - In-house reviews of transport arrangements identify opportunities for savings to be achieved through the commissioning of smaller vehicles.

11.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 The recommendations set out below enable the Council to: -
- Increase the contribution charge in respect of Post 16 Travel and Paid Permits within the context of the Fees and Charges policies, whilst maintaining assistance to pupils and families from low-income households; and
 - Continue to maximise the efficiency with which home to school transport for eligible pupils is commissioned.

12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- i) The Corporate Director determines the cost of the contribution rate for the academic year 2026-27 to be £846
- ii) The council continue to offer 50% discount in respect of the contribution charges for Post 16 travel and paid permits utilising the criteria set out at Appendix B; and
- iii) The Terms and Conditions for the Paid Permits are not amended.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Examples of Contribution Charges Levied by Equivalent Local Authorities
Appendix B – Criteria for the 50% Reduction in the Contribution Charges
Appendix C – Terms and Conditions for the Paid Permits
Appendix D – Equalities Impact Assessment

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Home to School Travel Policy
Fees and Charges Policy

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23 March 2026

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Presenter of Report – *Jon Holden, Head of School Organisation and Transport*

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.

PLEASE ALSO NOTE THAT IF ANY REPORTS / APPENDICES INCLUDE SIGNATURES THESE MUST BE REMOVED / DELETED PRIOR TO SENDING REPORTS / APPENDICES TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES. Appendices should include an Equality Impact Assessment and a Climate Impact Assessment where appropriate