

# **The Vale of Glamorgan Council**

## **Cabinet Meeting: 9 May, 2016**

### **Report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration**

#### **Passenger Fares - School Transport Services**

##### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider the introduction of revised passenger fares on non statutory school transport services provided by the Council.

##### **Recommendations**

1. That the proposals to standardise fares on school fare paying services and to increase the cost of purchasing a spare seat on a contracted school service as detailed in this report be referred to Scrutiny Committee ( Environment and Regeneration) for consideration.
2. That a further report be presented to Cabinet on conclusion of the consideration of the issues as detailed above by the Scrutiny Committee (Economy and Regeneration).

##### **Reasons for the Recommendations**

1. To allow full consideration of the details of this report by the appropriate Committee.
2. To allow Cabinet to determine a new fare structure for non statutory school transport services after taking into account the views of the relevant Scrutiny Committee

##### **Background**

2. At its discretion and to reduce the number of cars going into certain schools and encouraging use of public transport from an early age, the Council provides fare paying school transport services. Pupils pay a daily fare to use these services, which cater for pupils who live less than the eligible distance for free school transport from school.
3. In addition, at its discretion, to minimise vacant spaces on buses the Council also sells, at a cost of £225 per annum, any spare seats on contracted mainstream transport to those pupils who do not qualify for free school transport and live in the Vale of Glamorgan.
4. As the Council's School transport budget is subject to significant challenges during coming years there is a need to consider increases to these fares to ensure that the

Council can still offer young people the opportunity to travel by bus to and from their educational establishment.

### **Current Costs and Numbers**

5. In 2015/16 financial year a budget of £267,039 contributed to eighteen fare paying school services. On average 500 pupils a day used these services. Part of this spend does contribute to giving access to pupils who qualify for free transport. Pupils who qualify for free school transport are accommodated within certain fare paying services instead of providing separate transport.
6. In the 2015/16 academic year 50 pupils opted to purchase a spare seat on a contracted mainstream school transport service at a cost of £225 per annum. This generated income of £11,250 for the academic year.

### **Relevant Issues and Options**

7. Fare paying school services have, at present, a fare structure (see [Appendix A](#)) that is not standardised. Fares range from £0.50 to £1.40 for a single (the average charge being £0.80) and £0.70 to £2.20 for a return (the average charge being £1.40). Most services also offer an annual season ticket for £225 per annum, with one service charging £195 per annum.
8. There are currently eighteen fare paying school services serving a variety of schools within the Vale of Glamorgan, seven of which have more than 40% of pupils entitled to free school transport travelling on them.
9. To standardise fares the proposal is to charge set rates of £1 for a single, £2 for a return journey and £300 for an annual a season ticket.
10. These charges will give pupils an easy fare structure to follow, reduce the amount of change drivers need to give (which is a problem on many services) and offer the opportunity for the purchase of a seat on a bus for a period of 1 year.
11. Increasing fares on fare paying school services to bring them in line with commercial services could potentially diminish the amount of subsidy required by operators on heavily used services. [Appendix B](#) shows the average daily numbers on each fare paying service. Those with low numbers of pupils entitled to free travel and high number of fare paying pupils have the potential to be run as commercial services if the fares are set in line with those of commercial operators.
12. The Council offers pupils the chance to purchase spare seats on mainstream school transport if the vehicle is not filled to its capacity with pupils who qualify for free transport. Currently, pupils not entitled to free transport can purchase a spare seat for £225 per annum.
13. The majority of pupils who purchase a spare seat on a mainstream school contracted service are of secondary school age, either living out of catchment or not meeting the distance criterion in order to qualify for free school transport.
14. In order to standardise the cost of these spare seats as well as recouping part of the actual cost of the spare seat, the recommendation is to increase the charge to £300.
15. The proposed changes could achieve extra income of £3,750 from increasing the cost of a spare seat from £225 to £300 per annum.
16. However, it should be noted that these savings may not be met in full as pupils may also not wish to pay the increased cost of £300 per annum for a spare seat on a contracted mainstream school service.

17. It should also be noted that increasing fares on school services could lead to a reduction in numbers using these services. This, however, should be weighed up against the potential longer term saving the Council could make by reducing the subsidy paid to operators. The five services with on average more than 50 plus pupils a day cost the Council approximately £85,000 annually.
18. If certain services were to have their financial subsidy withdrawn and operators ran the service commercially there is a risk as the Council would no longer have control over fares. There would also be no stipulation for the operator to provide seatbelts and seats for all pupils. Operators would also be able to withdraw the service if they felt it was not financially viable.

### **Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)**

19. In total School Transport budgets for 2016/17 are £2.5 million.
20. Current predicted reduction in the School Transport budgets is £320,000 for 2016 / 2017 and a further £22,000 for 2017 / 2018. These charges could assist to contribute a small amount to the budget which will assist us to meet our statutory obligations longer term.

### **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

21. School and College transport assists in sustainability and helps to reduce car use for the journey to school and helps to reduce traffic congestion.

### **Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)**

22. None as the services affected by this Report are non-statutory.

### **Crime and Disorder Implications**

23. There are no crime and disorder implications as a result of the changes to the policy.

### **Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)**

24. The Council has to satisfy its public sector duties under the Equalities Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties, Councils must in making decisions have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics.
25. Protected characteristics are age, gender reassignment, sex, race - including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality, disability, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation and religion or belief - including lack of belief.
26. As such any decision as to any change in the home to school/college transport policy has to be made in context of the Council's equality act public sector duties.
27. An initial Equality Impact Assessment Scoping Form has been completed and there are no negative impacts on those users with protected characteristics.

### **Corporate/Service Objectives**

28. The objectives in this report form part of the Transport Savings Project (TS04) which intends to reduce the amount spent by the Council on passenger transport services. This contributes to the Council's Wellbeing Outcome 2: An environmentally responsible and prosperous Vale.

## **Policy Framework and Budget**

29. This report is a matter for executive decision by Cabinet.

### **Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)**

30. As this report affects all wards, individual members have not been consulted.

### **Relevant Scrutiny Committee**

31. Environment and Regeneration.

### **Background Papers**

[Appendix A](#) - Fare paying school services - Fares chart

[Appendix B](#) - Table showing average daily numbers on each fare paying service

### **Contact Officer**

Emma Reed - Head of Visible Services and Transport 02920 673264

### **Officers Consulted**

Mainstream School Transport Officer  
Additional Learning Needs School Transport Officer  
Post 16 College Transport Officer (Temporary)  
Access & Policy Manager  
Complex Needs and School Liaison Officer  
Visible Services and Transport Accountant  
Committee Reports  
Director of Learning and Development

### **Responsible Officer:**

Miles Punter - Director of Environment and Housing Services.