

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 6TH JUNE, 2016

REFERENCE FROM ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATIONS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 17TH MAY, 2016

“ PASSENGER FARES - SCHOOL TRANSPORT SERVICES (REF) -

Cabinet had on 9th May, 2016 considered the introduction of revised passenger fares on non-statutory school transport services provided by the Council and had referred the report to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration. The Head of Service for Visible Services and Transport informed Committee that 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 provided fare paying school transport services. Pupils paid a daily fare to use the services, which catered for pupils who lived less than the eligible distance for free school transport from school.

In addition, again at its discretion, to minimise vacant spaces on buses the Council also sold, at a cost of £225 per annum, any spare seats on contracted mainstream transport to those pupils who did not qualify for free school transport and lived in the Vale of Glamorgan.

As the Council's School transport budget was subject to significant reductions and challenges during coming years there was a need to consider increases to the fares to ensure that the Council could still offer young people the opportunity to travel by bus to and from their educational establishment.

In 2015/16 financial year a budget of £267,039 contributed to eighteen fare paying school services. On average 500 pupils a day used the services. 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. Fare paying school services had, at present, a fare structure (see Appendix A) that was not standardised. Fares ranged 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. There were currently eighteen fare paying school services serving a variety of schools within the Vale of Glamorgan, seven of which had more than 40% of pupils entitled to free school transport travelling on them. To standardise fares the proposal was to charge set rates of £1 a single, £2 a return journey and £300 for an annual season ticket. These charges would give pupils an easy fare structure to follow, reduce the amount of change drivers need to give which was a problem on many services and offer the opportunity for the purchase of a seat on a bus for a period of 1 year.

The Council also at its discretion, offered pupils the chance to purchase spare seats on mainstream school transport if the vehicle was not filled to its capacity with pupils

who qualified for free transport. Currently, pupils not entitled to free transport could purchase a spare seat for £225 per annum.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Education with permission to speak informed the Committee that the last time the prices had been reviewed was over three years ago. It was important to be aware that other local authorities did not provide post-16 services and that only 50% of the actual cost incurred by the Council was being charged. A number of Members also concurred that it was important to protect post-16 students and to note that although the amount of £300 for the cost of spare seats potentially could be seen as a large increase, the prices had not been reviewed for over three years with Members accepting that this was appropriate in the circumstances.

Following the discussion it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED -

(1) T H A T 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 within the report as detailed below:

Charges - £1.00 single fare
 £2.00 return journey
 £300.00 for an annual ticket

be agreed with effect from 1st September, 2016.

(2) T H A T notwithstanding the above, Cabinet be requested to approve that a review of such charges is undertaken on an annual basis as part of the fees and charges for Visible Services and Transport.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) In view of the contents contained within the report and the discussion undertaken at the meeting.

(2) In order that fare structures were considered to be reviewed on an annual basis.”