

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:-	Cabinet Meeting
2.	Date:-	22 February 2012
3.	Title:-	Transport Policy for learners aged 16-19 years in further education All Wards
4.	Directorate:-	Environment and Development Services

5. Summary

Cabinet meeting of 8 February 2012

6. Recommendations

That Cabinet approve the new Transport Policy for learners aged 16-19 years in further education for 2012-13.

That the new policy be implemented from April 2012 in order to meet statutory obligations.

7. Proposals and Details

Cabinet, at its Meeting of 8th February 2012 considered a report on Home to School Transport which identified transport for 'Post 16 learners' as one of the discretionary areas where the council provided free transport. Consultation on proposed changes to the policy for this group closed on 20th January 2012, and a new policy has been drafted for members' approval.

Free transport assistance is currently provided for Post 16 learners attending Rotherham Special Schools with Post 16 provision. It must also be provided for those Post 16 learners with special needs attending other educational establishments both within and outside Rotherham assessed as entitled. Whilst there is a duty to provide transport assistance to those who qualify, there is no requirement to provide this to be free of charge. It is proposed to discontinue the current provision of discretionary free transport for Post 16 learners by September 2012.

For students who have physical and medical difficulties which prevent them accessing public transport it is proposed to continue to provide transport for these students (with due regard to the Equality Act 2010), following an assessment of need and relevant medical evidence; this will be a chargeable service.

Charges will be introduced by September 2012 because they are attending non-statutory education (i.e. not 5-16 years olds) based on the concessionary rate and distance criteria. Existing means testing benefits will also be used to calculate these contributions to ensure a fair and equitable charge for all families. The proposed charges for eligible learners will range from £1.20 to £2.40 per day.

All new and existing requests for transport assistance will be reviewed and assessed individually from April 2012, under this new policy, so that learners are able to make an informed choice of their Post 16 provider for September 2012.

8. Finance

It is not possible to calculate potential savings for this group since they are not identified separately from other groups who are currently entitled to a free service.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Unless a new Post 16 policy is published by the Local Authority by April 2012 the changes cannot be implemented in preparation for those learners who are due to attend further education provision in September 2012.

This Policy cannot state that no transport assistance is available and any support that is provided should be equitable between educational providers.

There have been major changes to the way that Post 16 learners are funded such as the 16-18 Bursary Scheme and increases in Learner Support Fund grants to schools and colleges.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

RMBC will continue to provide its statutory requirements with due regard to the Equality Act 2010. Those learners aged 16-19 years who are assessed as eligible for transport assistance to attend further education will be required to contribute the concessionary fare equivalent.

The previous Post 16 Policy will now be referred to as the Transport Policy for learners aged 16-19 years in further education.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Cabinet Report 21 September 2011:

“Discretionary Home to School Transport Provision”

Cabinet Report 8 February 2012:

“Discretionary Home to School Transport Provision”

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