

Cabinet Member
Education and Skills

Cllr Mike Appleyard

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Mr Andrew Howard
Chair FACT Bucks

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MA/fams

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Dear Andrew

Post 16 Home to School Transport

Thank you for your letter dated 17 March 2019. We had some extremely difficult decisions to make in our Home to School Transport review. We are working to reduce the negative impacts from the changes as far as we possibly can.

Before I address the specific issues you have raised within your letter, please can I share with you the plan to support parents and carers so that we can ensure the impact on families is managed as sensitively as possible. These include:

- Focussed sessions for parents and carers with young people with SEND to be scheduled in May.
- Input from Aylesbury College about the bursary that can be accessed to support travel costs.
- Input about Independent travel training to share what it is and how young people can benefit from it.
- Information for families with a low income that can support transport costs.

We currently support travel assistance for 400 young people 16 years and over who have SEND. We will be looking at the individual needs of all of these children. This will allow us to give consideration to those children where their level of needs impacts on their mobility. We aim to carry out this needs assessment in advance of any changes being implemented and we would invite your organisation to work with us to ensure communication with parents is managed effectively and sensitively.

We are currently drafting the agenda for these sessions and confirming dates, and it would be really helpful if we could engage with you on this planning. If you are comfortable with this, I will send you the draft agenda and proposed dates very shortly.

We had open discussions with residents at our public events, and on a one to one basis. We also responded to all written enquiries, logged these and considered all issues that were raised. The consultation provided us with an opportunity to seek views on how our residents felt about the proposals, providing details on a range of potential changes.



The final proposals were put together following full consideration of the consultation responses. Cabinet was provided with the detailed consultation report alongside other service review documentation, such as projected numbers of children, financial forecasts and details of our additional plans to provide a more sustainable transport offer across the county.

The changes agreed to Home to School Transport on 4 March at Cabinet included a decision to implement the new Post 16 transport policy to new and existing students from September 2019. The report made it clear that the reason for this was due to financial sustainability, based on an updated financial analysis of pressures. The public consultation gave two options: to either introduce a fixed charge; or a banded scale of charges. The report fairly presented the results of the consultation on this aspect, as well as general views on the proposal. The banded charging was agreed upon as this is in line with arrangements for mainstream post 16 students. We acknowledge that this is a disappointing result for many parents.

The Council completed a detailed Equality Impact Assessment and identified that the proposed changes to the Post 16 transport policy disproportionately negatively impacted students with disabilities. In mitigation, it was stated that the charges were a contribution and transport was still subsidised, there would be an increased focus and support for independent travel training and a communications and engagement strategy that will include more information sessions with parents/carers. The Council also identified that it would work with colleges and schools in relation to access to bursaries, keep its SEND provision under review and noted that exceptional circumstances would be taken into account in individual cases.

We engaged with FACT Bucks on a number of occasions when planning and delivering the consultation, along with other stakeholders. The revised Home to School Policy document was co-produced with FACT Bucks and SENDIAS. The Council is grateful to FACT for assisting with the consultation process. The cabinet report references the involvement of FACT, but it is clear that the decision was the Council's. The Council took account of statutory guidance for Post 16 and home to school transport. Different implementation dates were set for the Everham and Ivinghoe promise, the Post 16 proposals and the changes to commissioning arrangements and route rationalisation. Reasons for the different implementation dates are provided in the cabinet papers.

Our Annual Transport Statement for 2019 is due to be published by the end of May and will feature comprehensive information for parents and students about available support, including how to access additional funds and bursaries to support them to remain in education.

The Cabinet report deals with the 16-18 duty and this is what we consulted on. The arrangements for students aged 19-25 remain unchanged. The adult learner duty states assistance must be free of charge. The version of the Post 16 Transport Statement attached to the Cabinet papers is marked as being 'under review'. The paragraph referring to 19-25 duties was updated during the sessions with FACT Bucks and SENDIAS. This will be added back into the final version of the document for publication by the end of May 2019.

We want parents to know that we will continue to provide the most appropriate modes of transport, so that our most vulnerable learners are able to travel to and from school safely, and support those for whom public transport is not a reasonable option. We will be communicating directly with families affected by these changes over the coming months to ensure all of the details are known.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mike', with a long, sweeping horizontal line underneath it.

MIKE APPLEYARD
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills