

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Report to:	Executive Committee
Date:	15 December, 2014
Subject:	School bus contracts – tenders and charges structure
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr. Ieuan Williams
Head of Service:	Delyth Molyneux
Report Author: Tel: E-mail:	Jane Marr 01248 752936 jaynemarr@anglesey.gov.uk
Local Members:	

A –Recommendation/s and reason/s
<p>The Executive Committee are requested to make a decision on three matters:</p> <p>R1 Introduce a “no pass no travel” policy for all pupils. R2 Increase the charges to align closer with true costs. R3 Rationalize non-statutory bus services.</p> <p>There are several reasons why there is a need to give consideration to these matters including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the health and safety of every traveller with an allocated seat on the bus service. • Regain costs that have been absorbed by the department to date as it is not possible to continue to do so in the present climate. • Ensure equality of opportunity to all families across primary school provision. <p>It is recommended that the Executive Committee agree to the following matters</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree to introduce a “no pass, no travel” system. This will be of assistance in ensuring that every traveller has an allocated seat on the bus. 2. Option 2 noted in the appendix, namely to <u>gradually</u> increase charges in order to reconcile the fees with the remainder of the North Wales authorities. 3. Ensure consistency in the implementation of the authority’s transport policy by abolishing the following non-statutory services: Pentre Berw to Ysgol Esceifiog and Maes Llwyn / Porth Amlwch to Ysgol Gynradd Amlwch.

B – What other options did you consider and why did you reject them and/or opt for this option?

The principle “no pass, no travel” is relevant to each one of the proposals. Consideration was given to two other options in relation to raising fees, namely (i) raise the fee by 5% annually to meet inflation costs and (ii) adapt the level of increase in charges to the groups of travellers described in the report [pupils living under 3 miles from the secondary school (2 in primary school); post-16 school students; post-16 college students; pupils purchasing ‘vacant seat scheme’ / out of catchment area school].

Due consideration was given to continuing with the service for Esceifiog and Amlwch Primary schools on condition that users meet the costs, but this was not accepted on the basis that the arrangement is contrary to the county’s policy.

C – Why is this a decision for the Executive?

The decision involves raising transport fees that is part of the Executive Committee’s terms of reference.

CH – Is this decision consistent with policy approved by the full Council?

Yes

D – Is this decision within the budget approved by the Council?

Yes

DD – Who did you consult?		What did they say?
1	Chief Executive / Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) (mandatory)	
2	Finance / Section 151 (mandatory)	
3	Legal / Monitoring Officer (mandatory)	No legal issues, but some procurement aspects to be considered.
4	Human Resources (HR)	No comments
5	Property	The transport department consider the report to be reasonable. Some additional costs may arise for the administration of additional bus passes and fees. This will be duly considered as the process is reviewed.
6	Information Communication Technology (ICT)	
7	Scrutiny	<p>Extract: Draft Minutes Corporate Scrutiny Committee 24th November, 2014 - Relating to Item9/10: School Bus Contracts;</p> <p>9 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC It was resolved under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion on the following item on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Section 12A of the said Act and in the Public Interest Test presented.</p> <p>10 SCHOOL BUS CONTRACTS – TENDERS AND CHARGES STRUCTURE The report of the Secondary Education Officer outlining proposed changes to the school bus tenders and charges structure was presented for the Committee’s consideration. The report set out the issues which need to be addressed as part of the re-tendering process along</p>

		<p>with proposals for introducing a no pass, no travel policy for all pupils; an increase in charges in line with true costs and the rationalisation of non-statutory bus services.</p> <p>The Secondary Education officer reported on the rationale for introducing a no pass, no travel policy which would better enable the Education Authority to ensure health and safety arrangements in terms of being able to provide a passenger list in circumstances where that may be required. With regard to charges, the Officer explained that the new contracts for bus travel will continue to include annual inflationary adjustments for the department. Whilst the department has to date been able to absorb these costs without increasing costs to the traveller, the present financial situation makes it difficult to sustain this situation. She referred to the current charging structure compared with the situation in other counties and elaborated on the options for change and their revenue implications. In relation to the provision of non-statutory bus services, the Officer said that that the proposal is to cease providing the non-statutory services set out in the report which are based on historical arrangements and are not in line with the Council's present transport policy. This would also ensure parity of opportunity to all families across the Island who are not served by such a provision.</p> <p>The Committee considered the proposals and sought assurance with regard to the following issues:</p> <p>That the proposed increase in charges will not disfavour pupils from disadvantaged areas. The Secondary Education Officer confirmed that there is a system of support available for poorer families under the Education</p>
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		<p>Maintenance Allowance for those in further education. A full impact assessment and consultation with stakeholders will be undertaken to ensure that no parents/pupils/schools are disadvantaged and that a fair payment system is introduced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That safeguards will be put in place to ensure that pupils who lose or misplace their travel pass will not be denied access to a bus service and that their safety will at all times be ensured. The Secondary Education Officer said that adequate temporary arrangements will need to be established for pupils who have lost or mislaid passes.• Arrangements for monitoring and administering the system. The Head of Learning said that the favoured way forward is to move towards an electronic system e.g. by extending the Squid school meals payment system whereby payments are made on line or by arranging a direct debit payment system.• The imperative need to communicate the proposed changes to parents, pupils and governors in a way that ensures they fully understand what they entail and what support is available. The Secondary Education Officer confirmed that work is being done with the Welfare Officers and support groups e.g. Team around the Family to inform parents and families of their entitlements.• The need to undertake a risk assessment in relation to the proposal to discontinue the non-statutory services as referred to in the report. The Secondary Education Officer said that that would be a first step in the process.
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		<p>It was resolved; –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support the introduction of a no pass, no travel policy for all pupils (Councillor A. Griffith abstained). • To support increasing charges in line with true costs as from September 2015 in accordance with Option 2 in the report. • To support the discontinuation as from September, 2015 of the non-statutory bus services referred to in the report, subject to the completion of a risk assessment of the routes involved. <p>NO FURTHER ACTION ARISING</p>
8	Local Members	
9	Any external bodies / other/s	Head of Children’s Services emphasized the need to consider the safety and safeguarding of children and young people as part of any new contract.

E – Risks and any mitigation (if relevant)		
1	Economic	
2	Anti-poverty	
3	Crime and Disorder	
4	Environmental	
5	Equalities	
6	Outcome Agreements	
7	Other	

F - Appendices:
Appendix 1 – School Bus Contracts – tenders and charges.

FF - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):

School Bus Contracts – tenders and charges

Introduction

There are three issues that the education department wish to have a decision about:

- Introduce 'no pass no travel' policy for all pupils.
- Increase charges to align more closely with true costs.
- Rationalise bus services that are non-statutory.

Introduce 'No pass no travel' policy.

The current position

The current school bus contracts are due to expire at the end of September 2015. New contracts need to be tendered to be operational from October 2015. No change is envisaged to the current policy on which the school bus contracts are arranged (as agreed by Scrutiny Committee on the 26/10/12).

The LEA provides free school transport for pupils under 16 as follows:-

- a) For primary school pupils residing 2 miles or more from the primary school in whose catchment area they reside;
- b) For secondary school pupils residing 3 miles or more from the secondary school in whose catchment area they reside;
- c) For pupils with additional needs (eg SEN, serious medical condition) whose assessment of need and/or risk assessment indicate that they are unable to access or travel independently on the usual transport provided to the nearest school appropriate to their needs;
- d) For pupils who do not qualify for transport under (a), (b) or (c) but who travel to school along a route that is considered by the County Council to be hazardous;
- e) For pupils who attend a school other than the catchment area school if it is the nearest school to the home and if the distance from the home to the school is 2 miles or more in the case of primary pupils or 3 miles in the case of secondary pupils.

Except for those children in (c), the LA expects a child to travel up to 2 miles to meet any transport provided.

Pupils who live under these distances (2 miles for primary pupils and 3 for secondary) are able to pay 40p per day direct to the driver of the bus for their transport to school. This is presently included as part of the contract and the bus companies keep this money. The department arranges extra buses in order to provide this service e.g Llanfairpwll, Porth Amlwch, Pencraig.

There is no free provision for post 16 pupils, and they are able to purchase a heavily subsidised travel pass for £60 per year to travel on the school/college buses.

The LA also offer a vacant seat scheme where parents can purchase a spare seat on dedicated school buses when their child attends an out of catchment school. This costs £60 per term or £120 if purchased for the whole year.

Issues which need to be addressed as part of the re-tendering process

'No pass no travel' policy.

The present policy of allowing pupils to pay on the buses makes it difficult to ensure that a seat is always available for every pupil. Consequently the Authority cannot provide a list of passengers in the event of an accident or breakdown, and cannot therefore guarantee being able to contact parents in such circumstances.

It is proposed to move towards all pupils needing passes either issued free to eligible pupils, or purchased if non-eligible.

This would introduce a blanket 'no pass no travel' policy, whilst ensuring that no pupil is endangered in an emergency, or if not in possession of a bus travel pass. Consultation with stakeholders will be undertaken to ensure that no parents/pupils/schools are disadvantaged, and that a fair payment system is introduced.

A number of Authorities currently operate such arrangements.

Ensure the collection of the £60 fee from sixth form pupils.

All figures referred to in the paper are for the academic year, not financial year.

Currently not all post-16 students who should pay for their travel passes, do so.

The authority is asking for permission to establish arrangements to ensure that all students who are supposed to pay for a travel pass, do so. Fair and flexible charging arrangements will be established to facilitate this, following a full consultation.

Increase charges in line with true costs.

The Authority will have to adjust annual charges in order to meet inflationary increases in the new bus travel contracts. To date the department has been able to absorb these costs without increasing costs to the travellers. However this will not be sustainable in the present financial situation.

Below is the current situation (annual costs), as compared to other North Wales authorities:

	Post 16	Pupils under 3 miles	Out of catchment
Anglesey	£60	20p per journey/£60 per year	£120
Authority 2	£0	£150	£150
Authority 3	£0	£150	£150
Authority 4	£0	£165	£165
Authority 5	£180	30p per journey/ £75 per year	£150
Authority 6	£0	£150	£150

Anglesey's post-16 students pay far less than a neighbouring county, and Anglesey pupils pay the least compared to the other five authorities for secondary pupils who live under three miles from their school.

Proposed changes to charging for bus journeys

We wish to explore a number of options as follows:

Option 1

Maintain status quo BUT introduce 'no pass no travel' system and increase charges by approximately 5% per annum, to cover inflationary costs.

BENEFITS	RISKS	MITIGATING FACTORS
Increased revenue	Families unable to pay lump sum	Introduce direct debit or on-line payments options
Dedicated seat for each traveller reduces the duty if care conflict for drivers		
Compliance with seatbelt regulations from October 1st 2014.		
Identification of all travellers on bus.		

Based on the revenue already received from college students, the 'vacant seat scheme' and passes for those pupils travelling under 3 miles to school, this would generate an increase in revenue of approximately £35,000. This will mean that not enough income is generated to meet the additional costs of new bus contracts.

Option 2

Gradually increase the charge annually in order to bring Anglesey in line with other North Wales authorities. For example raising the fee for under 3 miles for 2015/16 to £80, the charge for Post-16 to £90 and 'out of catchment' fee to £150.

Based on the revenue already received from college students, the 'vacant seat scheme' and passes for those pupils travelling under 3 miles to school, this example would generate an increase in revenue of approximately £64,000 in 2015-16 (not taking into account increase in the cost of the contract).

Option 3

Adjust the options presented above for the different groups.

Preferred option

The department does not wish to cut these services, but in order to maximise revenue, the department's preferred option is Option 2.

However should this option not be favoured, either of the other two options will improve health and safety on buses because of the introduction of 'no pass no travel'.

Option 1 is the least favoured as the new school transport bus contracts (due in October 2015) will be more costly than the present contract and adopting this would place the department in a worse monetary position. Option 3 is therefore the preferred second option.

Rationalise bus services that are non-statutory

Currently there are two dedicated services for primary school pupils living less than two miles from their school, these are Pentre Berw to Ysgol Esceifiog, Gaerwen and Maes Llwyn, Porth Amlwch to Ysgol Gynradd Amlwch. These arrangements are historical ones that were established when the routes were considered inappropriate for pupils to walk. Neither service complies to the council's current transport policy which states that transport will be provided "For primary school pupils residing 2 miles or more from the school in whose catchment area they reside". No other schools have such a service in place.

Providing this non-statutory service currently adds to the transport costs of the department by approximately £25,000.

In order to ensure parity of opportunity to all families across the island, the preferred option is to cease to provide this service from September 2015.