

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Leader of Trafford Council
Date: 27th April 2017
Report for: Decision
Report of: Executive Member for Children's Services

Report Title

Children, Families and Wellbeing All Age Travel Assistance Policy 2017/18.

Summary

The purpose of this report is to set out the approach taken to the All Age Travel Assistance consultation undertaken with regards to the proposed policy for 2017/18 and to approve the revised policy.

Recommendation(s)

1. That the Executive Member for Children's Services notes the Report
 - 1.1 The methodology and approach used for the consultation process;
 - 1.2 The feedback received from the consultation process;
 - 1.3 The Equality Impact Assessment in relation to the travel arrangements policy for 2017/18.
2. That the Policy is approved for implementation with effect from 1st June 2017.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Jill Colbert
Extension: 1901

Background Papers: None

The following documents are attached as appendices:
Trafford Council All Age Travel Assistance Policy 2017-18.
EIA All Age Travel Policy Updated May 2017
EIA Appendix A – School Census 2017

Implications:

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	Services focussed on the most vulnerable people Re-shaping Trafford Council
Financial	<p>The Council spends a minimum of £3.5 million per year on transport and travel assistance.</p> <p>The proposals in the report will generate approximately £15k per year additional income:-</p> <p>To increase the annual charge for providing travel assistance to eligible nursery age children and those students of 6th form age, including those children and young people from low income families.</p> <p>The current charge of £600, be increased to £750 for the 2017/18 academic year.</p> <p>For those families regarded as being on a low income, the current charge of £300, be increased to £375 per year for the 2017/18 academic year.</p>
Legal Implications:	To ensure the Council adheres to its legal obligations in relation to home to school transport, disabled children, adult learners and adults with care and support.
Equality/Diversity Implications	<p>Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)</p> <p>In line with the council's PSED under section 149 of the 2010 Equality Act an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out and is provided as part of the background papers to this report. The development of the EIA has enabled the Council to give due regard to the impact of the proposed changes on those identified with protected characteristics under the 2010 Equality Act. Members must have regard to the EIA, the likely impact of the proposed policy on persons with protected characteristics and the mitigation proposed in relation to those impacts in reaching their decision on this matter.</p>
Sustainability Implications	The Council will have to continue to procure transport providers to transport children across the Borough, and that number is likely to increase. A range of travel options are highlighted in the Policy. The Policy links to the Sustainable Modes of Transport Strategy.
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	The number of Passenger Assistants required is dependent upon a number of factors including needs of pupils on commissioned transport.

Risk Management Implications	These are addressed in the Policy and the EIA.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	Travel assistance enables eligible children and adults to access school, learning, training, respite care and activities which contribute to their employability, health and wellbeing.
Health and Safety Implications	These are addressed through the Service Standards described in the Policy.

1.0 Background

- 1.1. Trafford Council has been on a journey to reshape and transform services since 2010, which has resulted in significant improvements in service standards and effectiveness, as well as the achievement of challenging savings. To meet that need the Council's All Age Travel Assistance Policy was revised for the 2016/17 financial year.
- 1.2. The Council has recognised that the new policy contained some wording which users found confusing. Likewise the Council has now exercised, in the proposed 2017/18 policy, its statutory duty to review travel arrangements for service users; the costs and charges, and eligibility to assistance. The revised policy ensures that the Council's obligation to review is met and more clearly states eligibility and charges.
- 1.3. The public consultation was undertaken from 1st March to 26th March 2017 and details of the consultation approach and methods used are noted in section 3.
- 1.4. The Council recognises that children, young people and adults with disabilities and additional needs can have diverse needs that span a wide spectrum and the policy offers a range of choices to enable them to develop or maintain independence, access choice and engage in activities of daily living. Independent Travel Training (ITT), for example, is a structured opportunity to achieve greater independence and has been promoted by successful parents and families who have seen their son or daughter graduate.
- 1.5. The revised policy will apply to children of compulsory school age, pre-school children, children starting reception class, pupils attending grammar school or faith schools, young people of sixth form age, adult learners and adults with care and support needs. The policy is therefore not solely addressed to children and adults with disabilities, but is a wider document pertinent to all relevant groups.

2.0 The Policy Changes Summarised

- 2.1 This section summarises the main changes of the revised policy.
- 2.2 To make some changes to the wording of the All Age Travel Assistance Policy to make it clearer. Revisions were made to the following sections of the policy.
 - Definition of Compulsory School Age
 - Eligible Children
 - Free school meal entitlement
 - Children starting reception
 - Students aged 16-19 years in mainstream provision
 - Adults with care and support needs

- Travel assistance factors for adults with care and support needs and adult learners
- Reassessment
- Suitability of travel assistance
- Travel assistance solutions
- Journey times
- Safeguarding

2.3 As a result of the consultation feedback further changes were made to the following sections of the Policy.

- Definition of Compulsory School Age – removed reference to “him”;
- Children starting reception – removed reference to “him”;
- Adults with care and support needs – clarified that eligibility for travel assistance will be determined during the assessment of the adults needs under the Care Act 2014 and how this is carried out;
- Suitability of travel assistance – clarified the Policy where an individual has a Motability vehicle and replaced “*Council funded transport will not be provided under normal circumstances with may not*”;
- Travel assistance solutions - included Care Act 2014 Act Annex C para 15 definition to make it clearer which income streams are disregarded when making a financial assessment;
- Charging – When will the Council ask for a contribution to provide transport? – introduced instalment payments as an alternative to upfront payments.

2.4 The changes to the Policy would take effect from 1st June 2017.

2.5 To increase the annual charge for providing travel assistance to eligible nursery age children and those students of 6th form age, including those children and young people from low income families. (A low income family is regarded as one where the child is eligible for ‘free school meals’ or where the parent that the child normally lives with is in receipt of the highest level of working tax credit.)

2.6 For the annual charge to take effect from 1st June 2017 but be implemented from 1st September 2017.

2.7 The current charge of £600 would be increased to £750 for the 2017/18 academic year.

2.8 For those families regarded as being on a low income, the current charge of £300 would be increase to £375 per year for the 2017/18 academic year.

3.0 Communications and Publicity

3.1 The consultation was promoted through the following communications channels in order to promote the changes and encourage participation and feedback by all interested parties, individual users and groups.

3.2 The consultation was promoted on the front page of the Council’s website to deliver maximum exposure to ‘passing traffic’, as well as providing an immediate landing spot and link to the consultation’s dedicated webpage.

- 3.3 The dedicated webpage received a total of 419 page views and with 313 of these being unique visitors to the site.
- 3.3 Front page promotion was conducted for the period of 1st to 20th March.
- 3.4 From the front page a link took interested parties through to a dedicated All Age Travel Assistance Policy Consultation page. This contained general information on transport policy and background, and details of the proposals. It also had links to the full policies which could be downloaded and reviewed.
- 3.5 The webpage also invited feedback by allowing respondents to either complete a Yes/No question and/or to leave additional feedback in an expandable text box. Respondents could also send comments to a dedicated email account for review and inclusion.
- 3.6 Notification letters regarding the changes and the methods of responding to the consultation were emailed to parents where their email addresses were known.
- 3.7 Notification letters were also posted to the parents of all school age children and the carers of adult transport users.
- 3.8 Notification letters were also delivered to Brentwood school and to Passenger Transport Assistants for distribution to parent / carers.
- 3.9 A total of 527 letters were sent.
- 4.0 The consultation was also promoted widely by social media and other Council communication channels.
- 4.0 The Council's Marketing and Communications Team promoted the consultation via the Council's Facebook page.
- 4.1 Trafford Parents forum also promoted the consultation and provided links directly to the Council's web page.
- 4.2 The Family Information Service promoted the consultation via social media, placed information on their dedicated website, and also 're-tweeted' the news and information to their followers. Young people and adults were targeted; 687 Facebook users were reached and there were 3170 Twitter 'engagements'.
- 4.3 Information regarding the consultation was also promoted on the Trafford SEND Local Offer website along with an invitation to find out more and leave feedback.
- 4.4 The Council's Marketing and Communications Team promoted the consultation via a press release, which was issued to all local news channels.
- 4.5 Letters were sent to three local FE colleges at Trafford, Salford and Manchester, neighbouring local authorities, existing transport contractors and Transport for Greater Manchester inviting feedback to the consultation.
- 4.6 Adults and Children social care services were asked for feedback to the proposed changes.

5.0 Consultation Response

5.1 A total of 47 responses were received. This included 38 responses submitted via the web page. A further 6 responses were received by the dedicated mailbox, a detailed submission by Trafford Parents Forum and two detailed submissions were submitted by Trafford's Labour Councillors in response to the consultation proposals.

6.0 Analysis of Responses

6.1 43 respondents stated that they did not agree with the proposed changes.

6.2 Three email respondents did not specifically say that they agreed with the changes but commented that the proposed Policy was comprehensive and were supportive.

6.2 Thirty-three of the 41 on-line and email respondents submitted substantial comments on the proposal to increase the charges but did not provide feedback on the other proposed changes to the Policy.

6.3 Five key themes emerged across all the respondents and these are summarised as:-

- 11 respondents believed that the proposals were "illegal" or did not meet the Council's statutory duties regarding equality and the Care Act 2014
- 17 respondents thought that it was unfair to charge disabled children and young people for travel assistance
- 28 respondents said that the proposed charges are too high or should be free
- 6 respondents believed that no other travel options were available other than Council transport
- 7 respondents reported that they felt the consultation was not properly conducted

6.4 Five respondents provided detailed feedback about the proposals to increase the charges and the changes to the section on the Suitability of Travel Assistance for Adults with Care and Support Needs.

6.5 The following areas of the Policy each received a single comment:-

- Eligibility to travel assistance for 2 to 4 year old children not attending a Trafford primary special school
- Definition of Compulsory School Age
- Different appeals procedures for different categories of service users
- Introduction of pick-up points
- Introduction of instalment payments
- Waiving the charges for certain groups in exceptional circumstances

7.0 Recommendation

7.1 That the Executive Member for Children's Services notes the Report.

7.2 That the Policy is approved for implementation with effect from 1st June 2017.

Key Decision Yes

If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given? Yes

Finance Officer Clearance GB

Legal Officer Clearance PD

CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE *(electronic)*



To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Executive Member has cleared the report.