

STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING: GETTING MORE OUT OF OUR SPENDING

Proposal 5: Stockport Local Transport Update

Lead Portfolio: Adults Social Care; Children's Services; Education; Communities and Housing; Economy and Regeneration

1.0 Summary of proposals

- 1.1 A review has been undertaken to understand some of our key transport services across Stockport.
- 1.2 The review initially identified four areas where financial savings could be made by either changing or ceasing the service. The four areas we have considered are the Town Centre Metroshuttle Bus, Free School Bus Passes (Working Tax Credit and faith schools) and SEN transport for 19-25 year olds.
- 1.3 The latter review has not identified sufficient savings to secure taking forward but there may be scope for some budget savings as a consequence of a small reduction in high cost cases when these young people leave the 19-25 age range.
- 1.4 These proposals are part of the first phase of the Stockport Local Transport review, the second phase will begin early in 2019 and will involve a thorough review of all transport budgets with a focus on securing efficiencies through improved commissioning, procurement and contract management
- 1.5 It is acknowledged that in order to complete an effective review we will need to source specialist transport commissioning expertise to initiate new procurements and review processes.

2.0 Proposal Update

- 2.1 Full details of the individual proposals are included in the Appendixes. In summary they are:
 - a) To cease funding for the free Stockport Metroshuttle service after the current contract ends on 27th April 2019.
 - b) To change the entitlement criteria for Free School Transport to statutory levels i.e. low income defined as:
 - i. Pupils who qualify for free school meals,
 - ii. Pupils whose parents/guardians are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit.

- 2.2 To remove the faith element of free school travel eligibility. This will involve omitting catchment and associated Catholic school areas in the Free School Transport Policy in favour of: *The nearest School to the pupil's home address with places available*. And omitting the criteria regarding provision of funding or assistance to pupils wanting to attend faith institutions outside of the Borough, where there isn't provision within the Borough boundaries.
- 2.3 To continue to identify efficiencies in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities transport budget supporting 19 – 25 year olds. This includes the SEN department working with TfGM regarding the possibility of providing the yellow bus scheme to one of Stockport's special schools, and continuing to investigate the possibility of reducing costs by working with other LA on specific routes where there are shared out of area placements to reduce costs. A benchmarking exercise is currently being undertaken with other LAs. It is important to note that the SEN population is increasing at a higher rate than the general population and a likely effect is more pupils requiring specialist provision and hence eligible for transport too. Therefore this work programme is a key priority.
- 2.4 Specialist transport commissioning expertise will be sourced for a period of 12 months to review all the transport provision provided by the Council. This will include reviewing all other transport programmes, suppliers and contracts in order to secure efficiencies through improved commissioning, procurement and contract management.

3.0 Scope

3.1 The following transport activity is in scope of these proposals:

- Home to School transport,
- Town Centre Shuttle Bus.

4.0 Financial Summary

4.1 The Stockport Local Transport project needs reduce the budget by £0.530m by 2020/2021, with £0.260m of this reduction by September 2019. The proposals in this report would achieve £0.272m of the £0.530m budget saving required.

4.2 The financial savings that could be achieved by each of the proposals are shown in the table below.

Saving Name	2018/19 Cash Limit Budget £000	Full Year Saving £000	Revised Cash Limit Budget £000
Removal of funding for the Stockport Town Centre Metroshuttle	220	(220)	0
School Bus Passes: changes to Working Tax Credit eligibility	453	(35)	401
School Bus Passes: removal of discretionary faith element		(17)	
Total	673	(272)	401

5.0 Key Timescales

Proposal	Milestone description	Date Expected	Output at milestone
All proposals	Public consultation on the proposals	7 th December 2018	Consultation begins
All proposals	Cabinet consideration of proposals	18 th December 2018	Cabinet views on the proposal
Metroshuttle Bus Service	Partners and local businesses contacted regarding financial support	15 th January 2019	Alternative funding options explored
All proposals	Cabinet Decision	5 th February 2019	Cabinet decision on the proposal
All proposals	Subject to Cabinet Decision – implementation of the approved proposals	27 th April 2019	Implementation of approved proposal

6.0 Consultation and Engagement

6.1 The individual consultation plans for each of the proposals are shown in the table below:

Proposal	Consultation Plans
Town Centre Metroshuttle Bus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly available online questionnaire Posters on buses, at key transport locations, libraries and council public reception areas. Social media messages Targeted communication through local business networks. Targeted consultation with Disability Stockport.
School Bus Passes: changes to Working Tax Credit eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly available online questionnaire Targeted communication to all families in receipt of school bus passes

School Bus Passes: removal of discretionary faith element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted communication to all schools served by the school bus service • Social media messages
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7.0 Interdependencies, Constraints, and Risks

Proposal	Interdependencies	Constraints	Risks
Town Centre Metroshuttle Bus	Changes need to be agreed with TfGM who manage the contract on behalf of the Council	Contract in place until 27 th April 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative impact on trade and tourism on the town centre • Is contrary to the Council's Town Centre investment strategy and Transport Strategy
School Bus Passes: changes to Working Tax Credit eligibility	Year 6 cohort currently applying for secondary school places will be entering the process under a different set of Free School Transport criteria	Changes cannot be made until the start of the 19/20 academic year in September 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise in statutory eligible applicants • Increased number of unreasonable offers • Implementation of Universal Credit causing more students to be eligible • Reduced pupil attendance in priority 1 areas • Financial impact to families in priority 1 areas
School Bus Passes: removal of discretionary faith element	Uncertainty regarding the number of children who will be eligible year to year	Changes cannot be made until the start of the 19/20 academic year in September 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flux within the in-year transfer system creates uncertainty as to whether a pupil will be deemed eligible. • Redefining 'Suitable School' will affect non-faith applications as well as faith applications • Changes in pupil numbers each year affects the eligibility of students • Savings may not be realised if pupil numbers increase, causing school capacity issues

8.0 Recommendations

8.1 Members of Scrutiny Committees are asked to:

- a) Provide comments on the consultation proposals; and,
- b) Provide comments for Cabinet Members.

9.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Town Centre Metroshuttle Bus Proposal

Appendix 2: School Bus Passes: Removal of discretionary faith element and changes to Working Tax Credit eligibility