

Committee: **Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness**

Date: **14 September 2011**

Title of Report: **Review of discretionary home to school transport – East Chiltington to Chailey School**

By: **Director of Children’s Services**

Purpose of Report: **To receive the petition presented by Cllr St Pierre and to consider future action**

Recommendation:

The Lead Member is recommended to

- (1) note the local community transport operator provision of a commercial service on this route;**
 - (2) receive and consider the petition and to consider the benefits of further assessment work on the route; and whether to**
 - (3) request further assessment work on the route.**
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1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 The Home to School Transport Budget is £1,234,600 less in 2011/12 than in 2010/11 at £10,177,000. The decision made by the Lead Member in June 2011 to remove the final areas of discretionary transport from September 2011 except for children entering Year 11 is estimated to lead to a saving of £49,677 in 2011/12 of which £11,288 would be achieved through the removal of free transport to children not entitled statutorily on the East Chiltington to Chailey School route.

1.2 The Economy, Transport and Environment Department has confirmed that a survey of road widths along the roads between East Chiltington and Chailey School would cost £1,500 and a traffic survey would cost £350. If these were agreed this would mean an additional cost to the CSD of £1,850.

2. Supporting information

2.1 A Petition was presented by Councillor St Pierre at the County Council meeting on 19th July with 478 signatures. The petition calls on the County Council to maintain the East Chiltington to Chailey School Discretionary bus service. The Lead Member will recall that free transport on this route has been provided at the discretion of the Council since 2005. All other discretionary transport has ceased from September 2011. Pupils entering Year 11 this month will continue to receive discretionary transport in order to ensure their examination studies are not disrupted. This petition has been referred to the Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness for consideration. Standing Orders provide that, where the Chairman considers it appropriate, petitions are considered by the relevant Committee and Lead Member and that a spokesperson for the petitioners be invited to address the Lead Member. The Chairman has referred this petition to the Lead Cabinet Member for Learning and School Effectiveness.

2.2 There were also a number of questions from members of the public to the Lead Member at the County Council meeting in July questioning the safety of this route and

calling on him to clarify the widths of the road, the traffic flow levels and for him to re-assess the safety of the route for children.

2.3 The Director of Children's Services has asked the Economy, Transport and Environment Department to provide an estimate of the costs of such surveys which would be charged to the CSD. These are detailed in paragraph 1.2 above.

2.4 A road safety assessment was made on this route on 31st May following one of a longer route, but including the route from East Chiltington to Chailey School, on 26th May. Both assessments found the route to be safe for children to walk on accompanied by an adult as necessary. Whilst the shorter route assessment was undertaken in the school holidays, the first assessment was in school term time. It is the opinion of the Economy, Transport and Environment Department that any further assessment is unlikely to provide information which is sufficiently different as to lead to this route being reclassified as unsafe.

2.5 The Lead Member will be pleased to note that the local community transport operator, Community Transport for the Lewes Area (CTLA), has established a commercial service on this route from September including at school times. The cost of a ticket to the public is at a reasonable level and considerably less than the Council's vacant seat scheme rate of £648 per year, as set out in Annexes 1 and 2. The Director of Children's Services will be able to provide a verbal update to the Lead Member at the meeting.

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations

3.1 The Lead Member is asked to:

1. welcome the commercial bus service on this route;
2. consider the petition and consider the benefits of additional surveys of the route; and whether to
3. request further assessment work on the route.

MATT DUNKLEY

Director of Children's Services

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Tel: 01273 482967

Local Members: Councillor Stroude

Background Documents: None

**East Sussex County Council
Home to School Transport**

Vacant Seats Scheme

Many children do not qualify automatically for free transport to school. However, sometimes there are spare seats available on buses, coaches or taxis hired by the County Council to meet the needs of children who are entitled to free travel. These spare seats are made available to other children whose parents wish to purchase what are known as “The Vacant Seats Scheme”.



Priority for Seats	Conditions of Travel	Charge for Travel
<p>If there are more applications than seats available, the following lists of priorities is used to decide between children:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Children where the County Council has agreed to help with transport for special reasons. 2) Children attending the appropriate school who do not qualify for free travel. 3) Children attending an alternative school, who would have qualified for free travel to the appropriate school. 4) Others. <p>In each category, those living furthest from the school will be given priority.</p>	<p>Some conditions are attached to children travelling:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement to travel is given for not more than one school year at a time. • Agreement to travel may be withdrawn at any time, for example, because there are no longer any children who are entitled to free travel, or the seat is needed for a child entitled to free travel. • Children are expected to behave properly when travelling. 	<p>A flat rate charge is payable in advance each term. A reduced rate applies for the second child and subsequent children travelling in the same family.</p> <p>There is no reduced rate if a child travels for only part of the term.</p> <p>There is no reduced rate in cases of exceptional circumstances e.g. inclement weather/vehicle breakdown etc.</p> <p>Refunds are not normally made where, for example, a child is absent from school.</p>

Vacant Seats Scheme

Payment for Travel

Payment for the first term's travel should accompany the completed application form.

For future termly periods, letters (and application forms) are sent to parents automatically.

Permits to Travel

Permits for children to travel are sent to parents on receipt of payment.

Lost or damaged permits will be replaced on request and on payment of a small charge of £5.00. Second and subsequent replacements within any 12 month period will be charged at £10.00 and £20.00 respectively.

Withdrawal from the Scheme

Where children no longer need to use a vehicle, parents must let us know **immediately, and return the permit**. This helps to avoid depriving another child of that seat and also avoids payment being charged for the term.

Some Points to Remember

- Although a child may be issued with a conditional permit to travel on a hired vehicle, the basic responsibility for getting the child to school remains with the parents.
- Because a child is able to travel in one school year, it cannot be assumed that this will be possible in subsequent years.
- Occasions do arise where it is necessary, sometimes at short notice, to withdraw the right for a child to travel during a school year.
- If a child cannot continue to travel, it is for the child's parents to make their own alternative arrangements. The County Council cannot help arrange, or pay for these.

Parents who participate in this scheme must do so in recognition of these possibilities.

If you have any further questions about this scheme, please contact the Passenger Transport Team on Lewes 0345 6080190.

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County Hall
St Anne's Crescent
Lewes
East Sussex BN7 1UE
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Rupert Clubb
Director of Transport and Environment

East Sussex Vacant Seats Scheme
Comparison with Nearby Authorities

	Annual Charge For 09/10 Academic Year	Sibling discount	Notes
East Sussex	All age groups £600 (this equates to a daily rate of £3.16)	25%	50% discount for am or pm only travel. Year 11/12/13 pupils are not charged for Term 6 due to limited attendance.
Hampshire	All age groups £451 (this equates to a daily rate of £2.37)	none	
Kent	All age groups £490 (this equates to a daily rate of £2.58)	none	
Surrey	Under 8s £186 (this equates to a daily rate of £0.98) Over 8s £315 (this equates to a daily rate of £1.66) Over 16s £570 (this equates to a daily rate of £3.00)	50%	Pro rata discounts for am or pm only travel, and for travel on fewer days of the week.
West Sussex	<u>Reception – Y6</u> under statutory walking distance £165 over statutory walking distance £189 (this equates to a daily rate of £0.99) <u>Y7 upwards</u> under statutory walking distance £249 (this equates to a daily rate of £1.31) over statutory walking distance £285 (this equates to a daily rate of (£1.50)	none	

