

Committee:	<b>Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability</b>
Date:	<b>26 April 2021</b>
Title of Report:	<b>Post-16 Transport Policy Statement 2021-2022</b>
By:	<b>Director of Children's Services</b>
Purpose of Report:	<b>To approve the proposed Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for the 2021-2022 academic year</b>

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

**The Lead Member is recommended to approve the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for the 2021-22 academic year as set out in Appendix 3.**

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### **1. Background**

1.1 Once young people reach school leaving age, the assistance local authorities are required to provide with transport to school or college changes. There is no obligation to provide free school transport that some younger children are entitled to (as a result of, for example, age and distance to the nearest school or because of the nature of the walking route). There is a duty, however, on the local authority to provide travel assistance to learners of sixth form age and adult learners if it is considered necessary.

1.2 The County Council exercises its discretion to determine what transport and financial support are necessary to facilitate young people's attendance. To inform young people and their parents what arrangements are available locally, we must publish the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement each year. The statement aims to be a single point of reference that outlines the help that might be available through the County Council, schools, colleges and transport operators to help all young people of sixth form age and young adult learners aged 19+ (up to 25) who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to get to school and college. It includes information about:

- fares and concessions;
- the Council's home to school/college transport policy for learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); and
- contact details for mainstream colleges and schools with sixth forms.

1.3 The County Council is required to consult on the Post-16 transport policy statement each year before it is published on or before 31 May.

### **2. Supporting information**

2.1 The consultation asked for comments from secondary schools, colleges and special schools on the proposals. Additionally, they were asked to bring it to the attention of current Year 11 students as well as current sixth formers (and their parents or carers).

2.2 Consultation took place between 26 February and 29 March 2021 and sought views on the draft transport policy statement (**Appendix 1**).

2.3 Changes in the proposed Transport Policy Statement relate to dates and anticipated changes to travel costs. There are no substantial changes to the policy around the help from the Council that is available to young people.

2.4 The weekly Freedom Ticket is expected to rise on 29 August 2021 from £17.50 to £18 (the Freedom Ticket offers unlimited travel on nearly every bus in East Sussex for seven days in a row, including weekends). The expected rise assumes the Government's aid package for bus services (to commercial operators and local transport authorities) will allow prices to increase by then. One of the conditions of this aid has been to hold fares at pre-Covid levels and is the reason why the Freedom Ticket did not increase by 50p in 2020.

2.5 The charge to buy a vacant seat on a contracted school coach will rise from £155 to £157 per term. School coaches are not subject to the same Government aid referred to in paragraph 2.4. The charge is representative of the average cost of a seat across all school coaches. This is the first rise since September 2019.

### **Consultation responses**

2.6 There were 15 responses, and these are set out in **Appendix 2**.

2.7 The comments included calls for fares to be made cheaper and mentions of operational issues experienced by some users, including some Covid-19 related issues. These comments have been forwarded to colleagues in Public Transport.

2.8 A few comments related to seats on school coaches which operate where there are gaps in the public service networks. The criteria to buy a spare seat gives priority for sixth form students who attend their nearest suitable setting. As mentioned in paragraph 2.5, the cost reflects the average cost of a seat to the council. Students facing financial hardship can apply to their sixth form for a discretionary bursary.

2.9 Some respondents felt that Post-16 transport should be free and that the policy was discriminatory. The Council's policy complies with the law and statutory guidance and transport is provided where it is deemed necessary, subject to any charges that might apply.

### **3. Conclusion and reason for recommendation**

3.1 The County Council has carried out its legal duty to consult on the annual Post-16 Transport Policy statement.

3.2 The proposed statement does not differ from the draft statement. The Lead Member is therefore, recommended to agree the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement as outlined in **Appendix 3** to fulfil its statutory duty.

3.3 After publication, The County Council may revise a statement to change the arrangements specified should it be considered necessary. This can include revisions to prices which may not be known until the end of August.

### **STUART GALLIMORE**

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### Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for consultation

Appendix 2 – Comments made during the consultation period

Appendix 3 – Proposed Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for 2021-22