

LEAD MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND INCLUSION, SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY

DECISIONS made by the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability, Councillor Bob Standley, on 2 June 2025 at Committee Room, County Hall, Lewes

Councillors Cross, Denis, Maples and Milligan spoke on item 4 (see minute 5)

Councillor Murphy spoke on item 5 (see minute 6)

1. DECISIONS MADE BY THE LEAD CABINET MEMBER ON 29 APRIL 2025

1.1 The Lead Member approved as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2025.

2. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

2.1 There were none.

3. URGENT ITEMS

3.1 There were none.

4. REPORTS

4.1 Reports referred to in the minutes below are contained in the minute book.

5. RESPONSE TO PETITION REGARDING HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT PROVISION

5.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Director of Children's Services.

5.2 Ms Charlotte Strong, Lead Petitioner for the petition calling on the County Council for a bigger school bus to transport the rural children of Barcombe safely to and from Chailey Secondary School' spoke to highlight safety concerns regarding rural children from Barcombe walking across fields unaccompanied by a parent or carer in order to get to and from school, the policies suitability in order to determine whether the routes are safe and requesting that the Council works together with families from Barcombe who are affected, to find safe routes to and from their nearest local school.

DECISIONS

5.3 The Lead Member RESOLVED to advise the petitioners that:

(1) The home to school transport policy (HTST policy) has not changed, and is being consistently applied to families across the county; and

(2) Parents and carers of children who are not entitled to transport assistance can appeal via a two-stage process; and

(3) The possibility of combining current services into a supported bus service available to fare-paying passengers is being explored. Should this be successful, children who do not qualify for transport assistance would be able to travel by bus on payment of the appropriate fare.

REASONS

5.4 The HTST policy aligns with the Education Act 1996 and has remained substantially unchanged. ESCC policy has been able to provide transport only to children whose available walking routes to their local school are further than the statutory walking distance of three miles, unless they are medically unfit to walk to school or qualify under extended rights for low-income families.

5.5 Where walking routes have been assessed as unavailable, transport assistance is supplied. Transport assistance is withdrawn if alternative routes are found to be available and within the statutory walking distance. In this case a route safety report was requested following an application for transport from a family living on the route, as the previous assessment was out of date.

5.6 Routes may be re-assessed at any time and it is possible that the above situation may change, should routes become available as a result of improvements to infrastructure and/or measuring systems.

5.7 The petition sets out that there are four families with six children affected in this case. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) considers it reasonable to expect these families to work together to ensure that the children are able to make the home to school journey in reasonable safety.

5.8 The possibility of combining current services into a supported bus service available to fare-paying passengers is being explored. Should this be successful, children who do not qualify

for transport assistance would be able to travel by bus on payment of the appropriate fare and petitioners will be notified.

5.9 The HTST policy has not changed and is being consistently applied to families across the county. Parents whose children are not entitled to transport assistance are able to appeal via a two-stage process.

6. GROVE PARK SCHOOL

6.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Director of Children's Services.

DECISIONS

6.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to approve a proposal to change the type of need catered for by Grove Park School with effect from 1 September 2025 to include Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Severe Learning Difficulties in addition to its current designation of Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties.

REASONS

6.3 In accordance with the EIA 2006 and the 2013 Regulations, the Local Authority, as the responsible body, is required to determine the statutory proposal within 2 months of the end of the representation period. The Regulations set out the options the decision-maker must consider when making a decision, or the proposal must be referred to the Schools Adjudicator. The decision-maker can:

- reject the proposal
- approve the proposal without modification
- approve the proposal with modifications, or
- approve the proposal, with or without modification, subject to certain conditions being met.

6.4 Over a number of years Grove Park School has accepted pupils with a broader range of need than Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), including pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD). The Interim Executive Board's proposal to change the type of need catered for by Grove Park School to include ASD and SLD in addition to its current designation of PMLD with effect from 1 September 2025 will more accurately reflect the needs of the school's cohort of pupils. This means that any new admissions to the school would be considered against this new designation, and the school would be able to plan its curriculum and support to ensure it meets the needs of these pupils. There would be no impact on the placement of current pupils at the school, regardless of their need they would continue at the school.