

Council – 28 February 2019

Response to the Petition: “Post-16 transport for vulnerable special needs students”

Service: Children’s Services

Wards: All

1. Summary

An on-line petition was received on 7 January 2019. The petition, on behalf of Mary Elliot school, calls on the Council to “reconsider the proposed changes to Home to School Transport”. Also a paper petition in similar terms was submitted to the Council at its meeting on 7 January 2019.

2. Recommendation

That Council note the response to the petition.

3. Report detail

3.1 Statement of Petition

‘Withdrawing transport for 16-19 years old would deny and discriminate against many of our students. It would also place an untenable strain on the already stretched school budget. The school could not provide a service to any student without the funding made available by educating 16-19 year old students. Without transport parents/carers of these special needs students would be placed under even more stress. Resulting in some parents having to give up their jobs in order to transport their child into school thus increasing the burden on welfare and social care, which is already a stretched service. These students make up over half of the total school population, therefore without their funding there would be no Mary Elliot so where would they go. Leave the transport budget as it is at present and find different areas to cut back on if this is a necessary requirement for the Council’s budgets.’

3.2 Response to the Petition

The Council is committed to supporting the education and training of young people with special educational needs and disabilities. It is also committed to promoting the independence of these young people and supporting them to become adults who are living as independent lives as possible.

In October 2018, Cabinet approved consultation on proposed changes to the way in which travel assistance is provided to post-16 learners with special educational needs and disabilities as part of the budget setting process; the rising demand for travel assistance presents a significant ongoing financial challenge to the Council and the proposals sought to deliver significant savings.

In response to a period of extensive consultation and feedback from parents, carers, children, young people and other stakeholders including special schools and special interest groups, Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 13 February 2019 to pause the proposed home to school transport changes for post-16 students with special educational needs and disabilities.

This means that the proposed 'post-16 transport savings' will now **NOT** form part of the Council's 2019-20 budget savings.

4. Council priorities

Transport assistance for post 16 learners, with special educational needs and disabilities supports young people's participation in education and therefore contributes to the Council's priority that children have the best start, are safe from harm, happy healthy and learning well.

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