



Notice of Non-key Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Home to School Travel Assistance Policy Refresh 2019-20
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Robert Benham, Cabinet Member for Education, Children & Families
SLT Lead:	Tim Aldridge, Director of Children's Services
Report Author and contact details:	Amy Reed, Senior Commissioner and Project Manager, 01708 431858, Amy.Reed@haverling.gov.uk
Policy context:	The Education Act 1996 requires local authorities to make such suitable and free travel arrangements for 'eligible children' as they consider necessary to facilitate attendance at school and this duty underpins the policy.
Financial summary:	Agree an increase in spend of up to £14,024 per year on travel assistance provided in the form of fuel reimbursement to be funded from the existing Children's Services budget, with associated cost savings.
Relevant OSC:	Children and Learning
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	Yes

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The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Places making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connections making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Decision to approve the annual refresh of the Home to School Travel Assistance Policy for 2019/20.

2. Statutory Duties

- 2.1. The Education Act 1996 requires local authorities to make such suitable and free travel arrangements for 'eligible children' as they consider necessary to facilitate attendance at school and this duty underpins the policy.

- 2.2. The policy is written in conjunction with the:

- Education Act 1996
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 0-25 years Code of Practice 2014
- Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance 2014
- Post 16 Transport to Education and Training 2019

- 2.3. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
- The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not and;
- Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not

- 2.4 Note: 'Protected characteristics' are: age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

- 2.5 The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

3. Annual refresh and practice

- 3.1. The policy has been updated and minor changes have been proposed. This includes:

- An increase in the fuel reimbursement allowance
- Additional relevant supporting medical evidence added to the policy's

appendix

- Minimal changes to wording and language
- Minimal changes to layout and structure

3.2. As part of the policy refresh, there have been changes made to the process for assessing applications to bring this in line with the updated policy and enable more efficient practice. This includes the introduction of a joint internal panel between Education Services and the Children and Adults with Disabilities Team for application assessments and appeals; the use of an online application database that is shared between the teams, an online appeals form and an online pre-screening questionnaire on the Havering website for applicants to check their eligibility before they apply.

4. Change to the policy – increase in fuel reimbursement allowances

4.1. One of the travel assistance options provided to parents/guardians of eligible children and young people is fuel reimbursement.

4.2. In 2017/18, there were 14 parent/guardians who received fuel reimbursement as part of their travel assistance arrangements. This number has been static for some time and, in order to increase the uptake of parents/guardians of eligible students, it is being proposed that the fuel reimbursement allowances be increased from £0.22 to £0.42 per mile and from paying for a maximum of two journeys per day (from home to school and school to home when the student is in the vehicle) to a maximum of four journeys per day (to include the return journey when the student is not in the vehicle).

4.3. Benchmarking has been completed on neighbouring authorities and it has been found that the proposed arrangement is in line with the majority of other boroughs. A London Councils survey in 2018 found the majority of respondent allowances to be in the £0.40-49 per mile range.

4.4. The average annual cost of a travel assistance taxi within the borough is £7,419 whereas the average cost of the fuel reimbursement for those students would be £1,441 under the proposed rate. Only 3% of students receiving travel assistance currently take up the fuel reimbursement option. The new proposed increased rate is designed to provide an incentive for parents/guardians to take up the option of fuel reimbursement if they require a form of travel assistance and, thereby, to reduce the overall costs to the Council.

4.5. The tables below show the costs and estimated savings for the recommended option of increasing the rate to £0.42 per mile and the maximum number of journeys that can be applied for per day from two to four.

4.6. The current allowance is £0.22 per mile for a maximum of two journeys per day (when the student is in the vehicle).

4.7. Table 1: Estimated annual cost of fuel reimbursement

ANNUAL COST OF NEW TAKE-UP BY STUDENTS	CURRENT / NO CHANGE 22p per mile (two journeys) <i>£1.94 per student per day</i>	RECOMMENDED OPTION 42p per mile (four journeys) <i>£7.39 per student per day</i>
1 new pupil	£378	£1,441
2	£755	£2,883
5	£1,888	£7,207
10	£3,775	£14,414
AVERAGE ANNUAL SAVING PER PUPIL	£7,041	£5,978

4.8. Table 2: Estimated annual savings

ANNUAL NET SAVINGS	CURRENT / NO CHANGE 22p per mile (two journeys)	RECOMMENDED OPTION 42p per mile (four journeys)
0 new pupils	£0	-£14,024
1	£7,041	-£8,047
2	£14,083	-£2,069
5	£35,207	£15,863
10	£70,415	£45,751
14	£98,581	£69,661

4.9. The figures above are based on the 2017/18 data set. If the recommended option is progressed, an increase in costs will be seen for the cohort currently receiving fuel reimbursement as a travel assistance arrangement of £14,024 for 2019/20. This assumes this cohort receives travel assistance by way of fuel reimbursement for the next academic year. This increase will be funded from the existing Children's Services budget.

4.10. However, the increased mileage allowance rate is anticipated to assist in achieving a greater take up. As demonstrated in table 2, if the parents/guardians of a further 14 students take up fuel reimbursement as part of their travel assistance arrangement, this could result in an estimated net saving of £69,661 per annum. There are risks associated with the achievement of these figures.

4.11. Whilst the costs for the recommended option are significantly higher than the current arrangement, officers are of the view that the mileage allowance in the current arrangement is not significantly high (especially in comparison to other boroughs) to attract parents/guardians to take up this travel assistance mode.

4.12. The average cost of an in-borough taxi is around £7,419 per student per year whereas, with an average mileage fuel allowance of £1,441. This means that there would be an estimated average saving of £5,978 per student per year.

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4.13. Taxis account for almost £1 million in spend per year for travel assistance and, when the applications start to arrive from April 2019, those parents/guardians will be priority for receiving the fuel reimbursement offer.

4.14. Due to how the changes made to the policy regarding fuel reimbursement do not negatively impact an individual, Legal Services' advice has been that the change does not require a consultation.

5. Financial implications

5.1. The proposed increase to the mileage allowance and number of journeys that can be applied for will result in an additional cost to the Authority in the short term, primarily for those parents/guardians already receiving the £0.22 per mile under the current policy.

5.2. However, the expectation is for the increased rate (better aligned with other Local Authorities) to incentivise families to take this as the key option in ensuring their children are able to attend school. The point at which efficiencies will accrue to core transport costs will depend on the uptake rates and the ability for the transport service to realign both the number of buses and the distance of individual routes.

5.3. There is a risk that additional costs are incurred for the recommended increased fuel reimbursements but that no savings are achieved. Those risks are twofold:

6. that no new parents/guardians take up the fuel reimbursement offer
7. that a notable number of new take ups have come from PTS buses (as opposed to taxis)

7.1. The existing cohort that use the fuel reimbursement mode will be eligible for the new higher rate and so, if fewer than three parents/guardians (of students currently in receipt of a taxi service) take the enhanced offer then the result would be higher costs.

7.2. PTS buses have a mixture of fixed costs (e.g. repayments, maintenance) and variable costs (e.g. journey time). If there is take up of the enhanced offer from students on PTS buses which did not result in reduced journey/route times for that bus, then the Children's Service would not see any reduced charges from PTS in that regard.

7.3. Officers will seek to mitigate the above cost increase and risks by actively encouraging parents/guardians (especially of students currently using taxis) to consider the new increased mileage allowance for fuel reimbursements. This will be monitored through the internal panel meetings for assessing the most cost-effective mode of travel assistance to be offered to eligible students and regular reports given to the Passenger Transport Project Steering Group.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

Social care and health

(i) To exercise the Council's functions in relation to social services including the formulation of the Council's policies and their co-ordination and implementation. Such functions include (but are not limited to) the following: (i) all matters within Schedule 1 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 and, in particular, functions in relation to child protection, children in need, community care and mental health provision

(ii) all matters relating to the National Health Services, including the consideration and review of NHS policies in so far as they affect the borough and in particular to have responsibility for joint care planning and liaison with the appropriate health authorities.

(iii) All matters relating to public health and dental health as conferred onto the authority by virtue of the National Health Service Act 2003, the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and any subsequent legislation (but excluding functions that are the statutory responsibility of the Health and Wellbeing Board.)

Education functions of Cabinet

To exercise the Council's functions in relation to education including the formulation of the Council's future policies for recommendation to Council where appropriate and their co-ordination and implementation. Such functions include, but are not limited to, the following:

(a) proposals for schemes of the fair funding of schools, including special schools

(b) making awards and other allowances to students attending courses at institutions for further and higher education and exercising the discretionary powers of the Council in that connection

(c) the provision of day care under section 18 of the Children Act within Early Years' Service.

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The approval being requested is to refresh the Home to School Travel Assistance Policy for 2019/20 under an administrative non-key decision.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1: Do nothing

Option 2: Increase the rate only from £0.22 per mile to £0.42 per mile

Option 3: Increase the number of journeys only from a maximum of two to four

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PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

N/A

NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Amy Reed

Designation: Senior Commissioner and Project Manager

Signature:



Date: 13 March 2019

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

1. The proposals appear a prudent approach to management of the school travel arrangements and there are no apparent legal implications for the Council in increasing the mileage rates as proposed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

1. The proposed increase to the mileage allowance and number of journeys that can be applied for will result in an additional cost to the Authority in the short term, primarily for those parents/guardians already receiving the £0.22 per mile under the current policy. However, the expectation is for the increased rate (better aligned with other Local Authorities) to incentivise families to take this as the key option in ensuring their children are able to attend school. The point at which efficiencies will accrue to core transport costs will depend on the uptake rates and the ability for the transport service to realign both the number of buses and the distance of individual routes.
2. There is a risk that additional costs are incurred for the recommended increased fuel reimbursements but that no savings are achieved. Those risks are twofold:
 - that no new parents/guardians take up the fuel reimbursement offer
 - that a notable number of new take ups have come from PTS buses (as opposed to taxis)
3. The existing cohort that use the fuel reimbursement mode will be eligible for the new higher rate and so, if fewer than three parents/guardians (of students currently in receipt of a taxi service) take the enhanced offer then the result would be higher costs.
4. PTS buses have a mixture of fixed costs (e.g. repayments, maintenance) and variable costs (e.g. journey time). If there is take up of the enhanced offer from students on PTS buses which did not result in reduced journey/route times for that bus, then the Children's Service would not see any reduced charges from PTS in that regard.
5. Officers will seek to mitigate the above cost increase and risks by actively encouraging parents/guardians (especially of students currently using taxis) to consider the new increased mileage allowance for fuel reimbursements. This will be monitored through the internal panel meetings for assessing the most cost-effective mode of travel assistance to be offered to eligible students and regular reports given to the Passenger Transport Project Steering Group.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

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1. No direct HR implications or risks.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

1. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:
 - 1.1. the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
 - 1.2. the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
 - 1.3. foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.
2. Note: 'Protected characteristics' are: age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.
3. The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.
4. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required as, due to how there have been no changes that effect the overall policy, the prior Equalities Impact Assessment remains valid.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

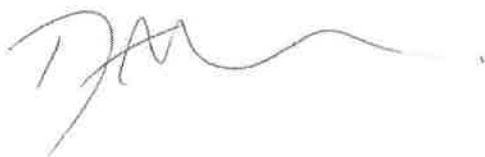
Proposal agreed

Delete as applicable

Proposal ~~NOT~~ agreed because

Details of decision maker

Signed



Name:

Tim Aldridge

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Director of children's services

Date:

28/03/2019.

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Debra Marlow, Principal Democratic Services Officer in Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on

28/3/2019

Signed



