

# Public Document Pack



County Hall  
Rhadyr  
Usk  
NP15 1GA

Monday, 15 July 2024

## Notice of Reports Received following Publication of Agenda.

### People Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 23rd July, 2024 at 10.00 am,

Attached are reports that the committee will consider as part of the original agenda but were submitted to democratic services following publication of the agenda.

Item No	Item	Pages
5.	<b>Home to School Transport Policy</b> To conduct pre-decision scrutiny on the proposals under consultation.	1 - 24

**Paul Matthews**  
Chief Executive

This page is intentionally left blank

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Home to School Transport Policy 2025-26</b>
<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>People Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>23<sup>rd</sup> July 2024</b>
<b>DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:</b>	<b>All</b>

## 1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 sets out the legal responsibilities for the provision of school transport. Within the legislation they place a duty on local authorities to review their transport policy on an annual basis. The policy needs to be confirmed by the 1<sup>st</sup> October and will apply from the start of the proceeding academic year. This ensures that parents and guardians applying for school places are aware of their eligibility for school transport before they submit their applications.
- 1.2 Public consultation on proposed changes to the 25-26 home to school transport policy commenced on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> July and will conclude on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August. The feedback from the consultation will be presented to Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> September to determine if any of the options will be adopted for the 25-26 policy. The purpose of this report is to provide People Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to consider the consultation options so that their views can be considered by Cabinet.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Scrutiny Committee consider the consultation options and provide their feedback for consideration by Cabinet.

## 3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The legal responsibilities placed on Local Authorities to provide free home to school transport are prescribed in the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. Welsh Government have recently concluded a review of the obligations set out in the Measure and published their findings and recommendations in March of this year. Their review concluded that “given the fundamental reform that Welsh Government are planning for the structure of the bus industry, and with the Welsh Government facing significant challenges around budget pressures there should be no immediate amendment to the legislation which underpins Learner Travel in Wales”.

- 3.2 The Learner Travel Measure places the following legal duties on Local Authorities to:
- Assess the travel needs of learners in their authority area.
  - Provide free home to school transport for learners of compulsory school age attending primary school who live 2 miles or more from their nearest suitable school.
  - Provide free home to school transport for learners of compulsory school age attending secondary school who live 3 miles or further from their nearest suitable school.
  - Assess and meet the needs of 'looked after' children in their authority area.
  - Promote access to Welsh medium education.
  - Promote sustainable modes of transport.
  - Where learners are not entitled to free transport, local authorities have the power to provide transport on a discretionary basis.
- 3.3 The Measure also places a duty on all local authorities to undertake an annual review of the transport policy which sets out how the statutory responsibilities and any discretionary policies that are being applied. The transport policy should be agreed prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> October for application in the proceeding academic year.
- 3.4 Currently Monmouthshire exceeds the statutory requirements and provides the following discretionary transport:
- Learners of compulsory school age attending a maintained primary school who live 1.5 miles or more from their nearest suitable or catchment school.
  - Learners of compulsory school age attending a maintained secondary school who live 2 miles or more from their nearest suitable or catchment school.
  - Learners aged 4 attending a maintained primary school who live 1.5 miles or more from their nearest suitable or catchment school
  - Learners attending their nearest or catchment Welsh medium school who meet the distance criteria or 1.5 miles for primary and 2 miles for secondary
  - Learners attending their nearest or catchment faith school who meet the meet the distance criteria of 1.5 miles for primary and 2 miles for secondary.
- 3.5 Currently the Council provides home to school transport for 2,828 learners travelling to 54 different educational establishments. The cost of this provision has increased year on year and the average cost per learner equates to £2,894. To ensure that we continue to mitigate escalating costs we undertake on-going route reviews to ensure that we maximise vehicle occupancy levels, operate our own transport provision and undertake competitive tender processes for externalised contracts. The in-house service has continued to increase the number of routes operated due to the lack of bids or where the cost of in-house provision is lower than that offered by the external market.
- 3.6 Following a review of the current transport policy a consultation exercise has commenced which considers three options which if adopted would align our provision with our statutory responsibilities and provide additional opportunities for the application of personal transport budgets.

- 3.7 **Option 1.** This proposes that the distance eligibility criteria for primary aged learners would revert to the statutory distance of two miles. An assessment of those currently receiving transport has determined that if this policy were to be adopted it would impact 70 mainstream learners. 53 faith learners and 10 Welsh medium learners all of which would no longer be eligible to receive transport as they live between 1.5 and 1.9 miles of their school. The potential financial saving if this option were to be adopted is circa £300k per annum. Appendix 1 outlines the potential impact on learners at a school level.
- 3.8 **Option 2.** This proposes that the distance eligibility criteria for secondary learners would revert to the statutory distance of three miles. If this option were to be adopted it would impact 167 mainstream learners who live between 2 and 2.9 miles from their school. There would be no impact to Welsh medium or faith learners as they travel out of County to attend their nearest suitable school. The potential financial saving is circa £365k per annum. Appendix 1 outlines the potential impact on learners at a school level.
- 3.9 An assessment of the potential environmental impacts of adopting option 1 and option 2 has been undertaken, the details of which are below.

Option	Emissions if all learners losing transport travelled to school by car	Emissions for journeys between 1.75 and 2 miles for primary and 2.5 and 3 miles for secondary learners
Option 1	33.06 tonnes	11.11 tonnes
Option 2	60.75 tonnes	16.16 tonnes

The above table provides the potential gross emissions which may arise if all learners impacted by the options choose to travel to school by private car. The reduction in home to school transport emissions which would arise due to the reduced number of contracts would mitigate these emissions and we will continue to support active travel opportunities. We have recently undertaken a tender exercise for socially necessary public bus services and used the opportunity to improve opportunities for secondary learners to access public buses to travel to and from school through timetable changes. We will continue to work with operators and evaluate feedback to identify any further opportunities to improve this provision to reduce the need for private car journeys.

- 3.10 **Option 3** proposes that where the Council is unable to secure an affordable external operator, or if it is the best financial option, parents or guardians will be offered a personal transport budget (PTB) to transport their children to and from school. The Council currently offers PTBs in limited circumstances and this proposal seeks to broaden their use. The proposal does not seek to make PTB's mandatory in the circumstances outlined in the option and should parents / guardians decline the offer, the Council will provide transport. Where an offer of a PTB is accepted, the Council will pay the parent / guardian 45p per mile and £10/hour for the return journey, to be assessed by the Commissioning team.
- 3.11 Consultation on the three options commenced on the 12<sup>th</sup> July, emails were sent to existing users, schools, operators and stakeholders and they were signposted to the

webpage, consultation document and on-line survey. At the time that the report was prepared we had received 155 survey responses. Hard copies of the surveys are also provided where requested. Following the conclusion of the consultation on 23<sup>rd</sup> August the feedback will be compiled and considered by Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> September.

#### **4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):**

Please see attached assessment.

#### **5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

5.1 All of the current discretionary transport arrangements were reviewed and a number of options considered. Options 1 and 2 have been taken forward for consultation as the proposals, if adopted, would align the Councils home to school transport policy with our statutory responsibilities. Option 3 would broaden the use of PTBs with the consent of parents or guardians.

#### **6. REASONS:**

6.1 The Councils current home to school policy currently exceeds its statutory responsibilities and last year cost £7,704,231 to deliver. The challenging financial circumstances facing the Local Authority have necessitated a review of its service models, particularly where we are exceeding our statutory responsibilities.

6.2 Welsh Government have concluded that due to financial constraints and the forthcoming bus reform bill they are not proposing any changes to the existing statutory requirements. A review of the home to school transport policies has indicated that Monmouthshire is one of the few Local Authorities that has not adopted statutory distances, in particular 18 Local Authorities have adopted 2 miles for primary aged learners and 19 for secondary aged learners.

5.3 Where learners do not have access to an available walking route, the Council will continue to provide home to school transport. Discretionary transport will also be provided where learners have evidenced medical conditions which prevent them from being able to walk to school.

5.4 It is recognised that the proposals will cause concern for those parents whose eligibility for free home to school transport will be lost, should option 1 or 2 be implemented. The Council has a responsibility to promote sustainable travel and we will continue to work with schools to improve opportunities for active travel and the implementation of school streets and with bus operators to maximise opportunities for learners to access public transport.

#### **6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

7.1 The cost of home to school travel in 2023-24 was £7,704,231 which was an overspend of £729,912 against the allocated budget. The budget for 24-25 is £7,779,910 and forecasts have already identified a potential budget pressure.

7.2 If option 1 were adopted we would expect to realise savings in the region of £300k and option 2 would generate savings of circa £365k.

**7. CONSULTEES:**

Public consultation

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

[Learner travel in Wales analysis and evaluation: recommendations report December 2023 \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

[Home to School Transport Consultation - Monmouthshire](#)

**9. AUTHOR:**

Debra Hill-Howells

Head of Decarbonisation, Transport & Support Services

**10. CONTACT DETAILS:**

**Tel:** 01633 644281

**E-mail:** [debrahill-howells@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:debrahill-howells@monmouthshire.gov.uk)

## Appendix 1 – Impact of Options 1 and 2 at a School Level

School	Primary		Secondary	
	Total	No below statutory limit	Total	No below statutory limit
Archbishop Rowan Williams	53	29		
Brynmawr Foundation School			4	3
Caldicot			387	89
Cross Ash Primary	89	2		
Chepstow Comprehensive			187	44
Caerleon Comprehensive			30	7
Crickhowell High School			116	3
The Dell	49	24		
Deri View Primary	12	5		
Castle Park Primary	1	-		
Dewstow Primary	2	1		
Durand Primary	2	-		
Goytre Fawr Primary	22	2		
Gilwern Primary	38	9		
King Henry VIII			298	9
Llanvihangel Crucorney	9	2		
Llanfoist Fawr	13	7		
Llandogo Primary	22	-		
Llantillio Pertholey Primary	10	3		
Magor Church in Wales	6	3		
Monmouth Comprehensive			550	12
Our Lady St Michaels	11	1		
Overmonnow Primary School	8	1		
Pembroke Primary School	1	1		
Rogiet Primary	51	1		
Raglan Primary	71	3		
Shirenewton Primary	64	8		
St Albans RC High			54	-
St Briavels Parochial CofE Primary	2	-		
St Josephs RC High School			43	-
St Marys RC Primary	8	2		
Trellech Primary School	82	5		
Undy Primary School	7	-		
Usk Primary School	88	14		
West Monmouth School			5	-
Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw			90	-
Ysgol Gyfun Gwent IsCoed			54	-
Ysgol Gymraeg YFenni	86	6		
Ysgol Gymraeg YFfin	29	4		





# Integrated Impact Assessment document

(incorporating Equalities, Future Generations, Welsh Language and Socio-Economic Duty)

<p><b>Name of the Officer</b> completing the evaluation</p> <p>Debra Hill-Howells</p> <p><b>Phone no:</b> 0775 851405 <b>E-mail:</b> debrahill-howells@monmouthshire.gov.uk</p>	<p><b>Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal</b></p> <p>The report seeks consent to consult on the Draft Transport Policy for 25-26. The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 requires that policies are reviewed annually and the agreed policy is published by the 1<sup>st</sup> October for application in the following academic year. There are 3 options being consulted upon which impact on the eligibility criteria for free home to school transport.</p>
<p><b>Name of Service area</b></p> <p>Decarbonisation, Transport &amp; Support Services</p>	<p><b>Date</b> 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024</p> <p>(11<sup>th</sup> July 2022, revision 2: Sept 2022, revision 3: April 23, revision 4: 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023, revision 5: 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023 )</p>

Page 7

**Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics?** Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	The proposal details the Transport Policy for learners attending state funded education settings between the age of 4 and 16. It is proposed that discretionary free transport for 4-year-olds and those attending faith and Welsh medium education will continue subject to them meeting the eligibility criteria.	The options propose that the distance eligibility criteria are increased to 2 miles for primary learners and 3 miles for secondary learners, aligning with the Councils statutory responsibilities. This will negatively impact on learners who currently have access to transport at 1.5 miles for primary and 2 miles for secondary. It has been assessed that this will impact 300 existing users of transport.	Bus timetables for socially necessary services have been improved to enable more secondary aged learners to utilise public transport to travel to and from school. We will continue to work with operators and review feedback to identify further opportunities for improvement. In addition, we will continue to support schools to promote active travel and where possible implement school streets.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Disability	<p>The existing policy provides criteria for the provision of transport for learners with ALN based on their assessed needs.</p> <p>All learners attending primary and secondary settings are able to apply for discretionary transport if they have a medical condition or disability which prevents them from walking to school.</p> <p>If a primary aged learner's parents have a medical condition which prevents them from supporting their child walking to school, they can apply for discretionary transport. No changes are proposed to this provision.</p> <p>Option 3 proposes the use of personal transport budgets for learners where we have been unable to secure an operator or where a PTB would be the most effective financial option. Parents will not be obligated to accept a PTB, but for those who are able to or would transport their own children they will receive financial support to do so.</p>	<p>The proposed changes to the distance eligibility criteria will be mitigated by the discretionary provision described.</p>	<p>The discretionary application process has not been changed to ensure that learners with a medically assessed condition which impacts their ability to walk to school can access free transport.</p>

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Gender reassignment	The provision of free school transport is available to all eligible pupils regardless of their gender.	Passenger assistants are not routinely provided on vehicles and therefore if there were issues of bullying or harassment action might be delayed until such time, we receive a complaint from a learner or their parent if they are travelling by coach. If they are on a smaller vehicle the driver may be more aware of any issues arising on the vehicle and be able to intervene	Where incidents of bullying or harassments are alleged to occur, the Commissioning Team works with the school to undertake an investigation. If the allegations are proven we will work with the school to put any reasonable recommended solutions in place including the provision of a PA. Sanctions will be imposed against the perpetrator of proven acts of violence, bullying or harassment.
Marriage or civil partnership	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pregnancy or maternity	We will provide discretionary transport to any learner with a proven medical condition that meets the eligibility criteria or due to their condition are unable to walk to school or access public transport. We will work with the learner, their parents, and the school to ensure that anyone who is pregnant and meets the criteria is able to safely travel on school transport.	N/A	We will work with individual learners, parents, and schools to ensure that school transport is safe for pregnant learners.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Race	. The provision of free school transport is available to any learner that meets the eligibility criteria.	Passenger assistants are not routinely provided on vehicles and therefore if there were issues of bullying or racial harassment action might be delayed until such time, we receive a complaint from a learner or their parent if they are travelling by coach. If they are on a smaller vehicle the driver may be more aware of any issues arising on the vehicle and be able to intervene	Where incidents of bullying or racial harassments are alleged to occur, the Commissioning Team will work with the school to undertake an investigation. If the allegations are proven we will work with the school to put any reasonable recommended solutions in place including the provision of a PA. Sanctions will be imposed against the perpetrator of proven acts of violence, bullying or harassment due to a learner's ethnicity.
Religion or Belief	.Free discretionary home to school transport is provided for learners attending their nearest faith school.	The proposed reversion to the statutory distances will impact on 53 primary aged learners who currently access free home to school transport. The proposed changes may impact on parental decisions for their children's preferred education medium.	Bus timetables for socially necessary services have been improved to enable more secondary aged learners to utilise public transport to travel to and from school. We will continue to work with operators and review feedback to identify further opportunities for improvement. In addition, we will continue to support schools to promote active travel and where possible implement school streets.
Sex	The provision of free school transport is available to any learner that meets the eligibility criteria.	Passenger assistants are not routinely provided on vehicles and therefore if there were issues of bullying or harassment action might be delayed until such time, we receive a complaint from a learner or their parent if they are travelling by coach. If they are on a smaller vehicle the driver may be more aware of any issues arising on the vehicle and be able to intervene	Where incidents of bullying or harassments are alleged to occur, the Commissioning Unit will work with the school to undertake an investigation. If the allegations are proven we will work with the school to put any reasonable recommended solutions in place including the provision of a PA. Sanctions will be imposed against the perpetrator of proven acts of violence, bullying or harassment

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Sexual Orientation	. The provision of free school transport is available to any learner that meets the eligibility criteria.	Passenger assistants are not routinely provided on vehicles and therefore if there were issues of bullying or harassment action might be delayed until such time, we receive a complaint from a learner or their parent if they are travelling by coach. If they are on a smaller vehicle the driver may be more aware of any issues arising on the vehicle and be able to intervene	Where incidents of bullying or harassments are alleged to occur, the Commissioning Unit will work with the school to undertake an investigation. If the allegations are proven we will work with the school to put any reasonable recommended solutions in place including the provision of a PA. Sanctions will be imposed against the perpetrator of proven acts of violence, bullying or harassment.  Equalities training will be provided as soon as it is available from the corporate training service and bespoke advice will be sought for individual cases.

## 2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

The Socio-economic Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage when taking key decisions This duty aligns with our commitment as an authority to Social Justice.

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?

**Socio-economic  
Duty and Social  
Justice**

The provision of free home to school transport ensures that all learners have equal access to education. The continuation of discretionary transport for 4-year-olds, faith and Welsh medium education ensures that parents can still access their chosen education establishment subject to meeting the eligibility criteria. Discretionary transport for evidenced medical conditions will continue to be available. Subsidised concessionary seats are made available where vacant seats exist. Learners have the opportunity to apply for free transport to their nearest suitable or catchment schools if they are different and out of county schools will be considered as part of the nearest suitable evaluation process.

**The proposed options will reduce the availability of free home to school transport for existing and future learners.** This may negatively impact on learners and their families who had applied for a specific school based on their ability to access free home to school transport. It will impact families who will struggle to provide alternative travel arrangements due to existing commitments or work requirements.

Where parents can demonstrate that their primary aged pupils have medical conditions that prevent them from walking to school, discretionary transport may be awarded.

The Council continues to work with bus operators to maximise the opportunities for maintaining or enhancing public bus service provision which will have broader benefits beyond learners.

The Council will ensure that for Post 16 Welsh learners attending their nearest suitable school will be able to access concessionary travel.

The Council will support schools to promote active travel and where feasible school streets.

### 3. Policy making and the Welsh language.

<b>How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:</b>	<b>Describe the positive impacts of this proposal</b>	<b>Describe the negative impacts of this proposal</b>	<b>What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</b>
<p><b>Policy Making</b></p> <p>Effects on the use of the Welsh language,</p> <p>Promoting Welsh language</p> <p>Treating the Welsh language no less favourably</p>	<p>The LTM measure provides LAs with the ability to provide discretionary transport to Welsh medium schools. This policy proposes that all learners wishing to attend Welsh medium education will continue to have access to free transport to their nearest suitable Welsh medium school if they meet the distance eligibility criteria.</p>	<p>The proposal to revert to statutory distances will impact on 10 existing Welsh medium primary learners who will no longer be eligible for free home to school transport.</p> <p>The proposed changes may negatively impact on future parental decisions to access Welsh medium education if they are unable to access free home to school transport.</p>	<p>The proposal will not impact secondary learners due to the need to travel out of County to access Welsh medium secondary education. The proposal will impact primary aged Welsh Medium learners attending Ysgol Gymraeg y Ffeni and Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin. A new Welsh medium seedling school will be opening in Monmouth in September which will increase access to Welsh medium primary education and mitigate the need for learners to travel to Abergavenny.</p> <p>Post 16 learners will be guaranteed access to concessionary travel to their nearest suitable school.</p>
<p><b>Operational</b></p> <p>Recruitment &amp; Training of workforce</p>		<p>Recruiting drivers is extremely challenging in the current climate and their driving qualifications take priority over their Welsh language skills.</p>	<p>All colleagues have access to Welsh language training courses.</p>



		Staff can only access Welsh language training courses where they do not impact on school transport duties.	
<p><b>Service delivery.</b></p> <p>Use of Welsh language in service delivery</p> <p>Promoting use of the language</p>	<p>Parents can apply for school transport through the medium of Welsh. All communications can be undertaken through the Welsh Language.</p> <p>The Council will continue to provide discretionary transport to Welsh medium schools subject to learners meeting the eligibility criteria.</p>	Drivers and passenger assistants may not be able to converse in Welsh on the vehicles.	<p>All colleagues have access to Welsh language training courses that are provided centrally.</p> <p>The consultation exercise has invited feedback on the impact of the proposals on the Welsh language and this will be used to inform the final proposed drafting and decision making process.</p>

Page 10

**10. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below?** Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal. There's no need to put something in every box if it is not relevant!



<b>Well Being Goal</b>	<b>Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.</b>	<b>What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</b>
<p><b>A prosperous Wales</b> Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs</p>	<p>The provision of free school transport ensures that learners can access mainstream, Welsh medium, or faith schools. The proposals to revert to statutory distances will negatively impact on learners who live less than 2 miles from their nearest suitable or catchment primary school and 3 miles from their nearest suitable or catchment school. ALN transport is provided based on their individual assessments subject to meeting the distance eligibility criteria.</p>	<p>The continued inclusion of discretionary transport for learners who are unable to walk to school due to evidenced medical reasons will prevent learners being disadvantaged due to their medical circumstances.</p> <p>School transport requires a local supply chain to operate home to school contracts. An in-house passenger transport service has been created to</p>




Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
	<p>The adoption of Welsh Government's Transport hierarchy and the promotion of public bus services will ensure that resources are maximized for the benefit of all community members.</p>	<p>respond to market failure that provides roles for drivers, passenger assistants and supervisory staff.</p> <p>Timetables for socially necessary public bus services have recently been reviewed to improve the opportunity for secondary learners to access public transport.</p>
<p><b>A resilient Wales</b> Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g., climate change)</p>	<p>Free school transport reduces the number of motor cars that need to undertake the school run thereby helping to reduce the county's carbon footprint. The proposals to revert to statutory distances however may result in additional vehicle movements if parents transport their children to school by private cars which will increase carbon emissions.</p> <p>The Commissioning Unit continues to work with the Transport team to maximise the opportunities to use public bus services, thereby reducing vehicle movements and the resulting carbon emissions.</p> <p>Learners can access free transport to either their nearest suitable or catchment schools, if they are different, which can reduce mileage, journey times and carbon emissions. Feeder status is not considered when assessing nearest suitable school, which may negatively impact some communities where their primary school is identified as a feeder school for an out of county comprehensive which is not their nearest suitable or catchment school.</p>	<p>The Council has started its fleet transition and currently has 12 electric vehicles in its passenger transport fleet.</p> <p>Routes are continually assessed to identify opportunities to combine routes and reduce the number of vehicles. Available walking routes are also continually reviewed where transport has been provided as a route has been deemed unavailable and the walking distance is below the eligible thresholds.</p> <p>We continue to prioritise the use of public bus services for secondary learners. The Council provides free transport to either nearest suitable or catchment if they are different, faith and Welsh medium schools subject to meeting the distance eligibility criteria. All Monmouthshire learners have access to a Monmouthshire catchment school.</p>

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p><b>A healthier Wales</b> People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood</p>	<p>The home to school policy adopts Welsh Governments transport hierarchy which prioritises active travel and public bus services.</p> <p>The proposal to adopt statutory distances will negatively impact on learners who may lose their eligibility to free home to school transport. This may result in negative mental health impacts for learners and create additional financial burdens for families.</p> <p>Feeder school status is not an eligibility criterion when assessing access to free school transport, which may impact on the mental health of students who attend a school which is different from their community peer group, if they wish to access free transport. There is no guarantee that siblings will have access to free transport to the same school as circumstances may have changed in the intervening period e.g., catchment reviews. This may result in negative mental health impacts for learners and create additional financial burdens for families.</p>	<p>Any policy changes will be published on or before 1st October in advance of school application processes so that parents are clear on their entitlement to free transport before applying for school places.</p> <p>By enabling parents to access free home to transport for nearest suitable or catchment if they are different, it provides the opportunity for parents to have a choice of schools and potentially reduce journey times if the nearest school (which could be out of county) is selected.</p>
<p><b>A Wales of cohesive communities</b> Communities are attractive, viable, safe, and well connected</p>	<p>School transport provides access to learners to attend their nearest suitable or catchment schools thereby developing friendships and support networks.</p> <p>School transport does not consider feeder school status which may be different from the catchment or nearest suitable schools which may negatively impact on those learners who will not receive transport to their preferred school.</p>	<p>Maintaining and where possible improving the existing public bus infrastructure will provide wider benefits for the community.</p> <p>We will work with schools to promote active travel and where feasible introduce school streets to reduce congestion at school sites.</p>

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p><b>A globally responsible Wales</b> Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic, and environmental wellbeing</p>	<p>The procurement of external operators is undertaken through a collaborative procurement system with neighboring authorities and contractual terms and conditions are aligned. We have developed or own in house transport provision to respond to market failure so that resources can be provided locally.</p>	<p>MonLife continues to develop active travel infrastructure and we will continue to explore opportunities to maintain or enhance the public bus network within Monmouthshire</p>
<p><b>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</b> Culture, heritage, and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art, and recreation</p>	<p>Free home to school transport is provided for statutory aged learners who wish to attend their nearest suitable or catchment Welsh medium school, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria.</p>	<p>All Welsh medium Post 16 learners attending their nearest suitable or catchment school will have access to concessionary travel.</p>
<p><b>A more equal Wales</b> People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances</p>	<p>Free home to school transport is accessible to all learners who meet the eligibility criteria. In addition, discretionary travel is proposed for specific sets of learners to ensure that they can safely access their nearest suitable or catchment schools. The options if adopted will negatively impact on learners who live below the statutory distances of 2 and 3 miles as they will lose their entitlement to free home to school transport.</p>	<p>Improvements to public bus timetables and networks will enable learners who do not meet the eligibility criteria to access public transport. Continued improvements to the active travel network will enable learners to walk or cycle to school.</p>

**5. How has your proposal embedded and prioritized the sustainable governance principles in its development?**

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p> <p><b>Long Term</b></p>	<p>School transport changes on an annual basis as new learners start their education journey or move into the area and others leave the education setting. We work with the Access Unit to identify those learners that are eligible for transport and have contacted all parents of new school starters to advise if they are eligible for free transport.</p> <p>As the service requirements change annually, long term planning is difficult however we are seeking to mitigate this through the adoption of WG’s transport hierarchy, improvements to the walking infrastructure and public networks and the proposals to revert to statutory distance criteria. If adopted the proposals will generate circa £700k of revenue savings enabling the service to operate within allocated budgets.</p>	<p>Routes are assessed when new learners apply for transport to determine if routes can be aggregated or vehicle size is increased.</p> <p>The Councils Schools &amp; Community transport service continually review their operational needs in order to respond to contractor hand backs, lack of tenders etc. The transition of the fleet will help offset our carbon footprint and plan for future legislative requirements for accessible and net zero school transport vehicles.</p> <p>The provision of annual Transport Policy provides a framework for how decisions will be made.</p>
 <p>Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p> <p><b>Collaboration</b></p>	<p>For school transport to be successful it needs to be delivered in partnership with operators, parents, schools, and learners as well as other Council service areas. We also work with neighbouring authorities to procure operators on a standard contract, agree annual price uplifts and share learning.</p> <p>The Transport team continues to work with the Commissioning Unit and operators to identify opportunities to improve the public bus network for learners.</p>	<p>Feedback from the consultation process will be presented to Cabinet and will inform the final drafting of the 25-26 Home to School Transport policy.</p>

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p> <p><b>Involvement</b></p>	<p>The Council is undertaking a consultation process over a 6-week period. All parents/guardians of existing users, schools and operators have been contacted to make them aware of the consultation. A press release was issued at the start of the process and we will continue to issue regular social media updates reminding community members to respond.</p>	<p>Feedback from the consultation process will be presented to Cabinet and will inform the final drafting of the 25-26 Home to School Transport policy.</p>
 <p>Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p> <p><b>Prevention</b></p>	<p>Due to ongoing issues around lack of external bids or bids being excessive our internal provision has expanded to fill any potential service gaps. Whilst the majority of contracts are still undertaken through external operators the internal resource has increasingly had to step in to cover contract hand backs or operator failures.</p> <p>Increased use of the public bus network to transport learners will improve the viability of publicly accessible services.</p>	<p>When a new contract is taken on by the internal service, if this exceeds existing capacity, we review existing routes and where possible release one back for external tender. This ensures that contracts are available for the external operators and mitigates the impact of additional contracts on the existing workforce. If no bids are received or they are higher than the internal cost of provision the contract is transferred to the internal team and capacity is adjusted accordingly.</p>
 <p>Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p> <p><b>Integration</b></p>	<p>The provision of home to school transport is an essential service underpinning learner's education journey. The service is however resource intensive and reactive to the needs of the learners. The proposed policy provides a framework which ensures consistency in evaluating applications for transport, provides certainty for parents and learners and guidance on how discretionary transport will be awarded. The alignment of the policy to WG's transport hierarchy will benefit the wider community by increasing the viability of public service provision.</p>	<p>The consultation feedback will be provided to Cabinet and used to inform the drafting of the policy.</p>

**6. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on the following important responsibilities: Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect any of these responsibilities?**

	<b>Describe any positive impacts your proposal has</b>	<b>Describe any negative impacts your proposal has</b>	<b>What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</b>
Safeguarding	<p>All drivers, passenger assistants and operators are required to undertake safeguarding training.</p> <p>The policy sets out how school transport will be assessed and provided for looked after children, learners with additional learning needs and mainstream learners.</p> <p>All learners, parents and operators are required to adhere to our Rule Book to ensure the safety for all those involved.</p> <p>All safeguarding concerns are subject to a multi-Agency referral process and when required a full safeguarding review.</p>	<p>. Where safeguarding concerns cross the safeguarding threshold, drivers and or passenger assistants may be suspended from undertaking their duties/contracts. This can create a financial and emotional burden on the individuals concerned and the safeguarding investigation process can take a significant period to resolve.</p>	<p>External operators will have the option to have a member of the Commissioning Team appointed as a welfare point of contact to keep them informed (as much as they are able) on the progress of the investigation.</p> <p>MCC colleagues will follow internal policy and procedures.</p> <p>The paramount concern remains the safe transportation of our learners.</p>
Corporate Parenting	<p>The policy sets out the eligibility criteria for looked after children. The service works closely with Children's Services to provision specific transport needs as required.</p>		

**7. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?**

The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008

Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2014

Welsh Government LTM Review March 2024

Existing Transport Policy and Lessons Learnt

Existing transport contracts and engagement with individual learners and their parents

School transport appeals and requests for discretionary transport

A review of other LA Transport policies

Llwybr Newydd: the Wales transport strategy 2021

Local Transport Strategy

**8. SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?**

The form has highlighted the complexities of the provision of home to school transport including its substantial impact on resources, its impact on climate change and the need to continually evaluate the provision to respond to a changing social, economic and environmental back drop. The proposed consultation will enable us to consider the feedback against the legislative framework, resources constraints and the wants and wishes of service users. The survey results and feedback will be provided to Cabinet to support an informed decision-making process and any policy changes to be implemented in the 25-26 Home to School Transport Policy.

It will also enable parents and learners the opportunity to plan for any changes from September 24.

**9. ACTIONS: As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.**

What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible
Report to be presented to Cabinet seeking approval to consult on the draft policy	3 <sup>rd</sup> May 2023	Head of Service
Undertake consultation on the draft policy	May – June 2023	Commissioning Team



People Scrutiny Committee	August 23	Head of Service
Review feedback, finalize draft and seek Member approval	September 23	Head of Service & Commissioning Manager
Publish Transport Policy 24-25	1 <sup>st</sup> October 22	Commissioning Manager

**10. VERSION CONTROL: The Equality and Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stage, such as informally within your service, and then further developed throughout the decision-making process. It is important to keep a record of this process to demonstrate how you have considered and built in equality and future generations considerations wherever possible.**

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
1	Cabinet approval to consult on proposed Transport Policy 23-24	27th July 2022	
2.	Cabinet Update	7 <sup>th</sup> September 2022	
3.	Cabinet decision to consult on proposed Transport Policy 24-25	May 2023	Updated to reflect proposed policy changes for 24-25
4.	Public Consultation	31 <sup>st</sup> May – 29 <sup>th</sup> June 2023	Draft document amended to reflect feedback
5.	Cabinet decision to adopt Transport Policy 24-25	September 2023	
6.	Public Consultation on 3 options for Home to School Transport Policy 25-26		

This page is intentionally left blank