

North Yorkshire County Council

16 May 2018

**Transport, Economy and Environment
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Chairman's Statement

1. Since my previous statement, the Committee met on 10 April 2018.

Committee – 10 April 2018

Home to School Transport - Proposed Policy Changes

2. The Committee discussed at length and fully debated the SEND Home to School Transport policy proposals.
3. Understandably three quarters of the respondents to the consultation either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposal to remove free transport for SEND Post-16 to 18 students. The other two proposals were viewed more favourably by respondents.
4. Our concern was that the proposal to charge for SEND Post-16 to 18 students will generate relatively small savings in comparison to the Home to School Transport budget as a whole and yet will impact upon families that need as much help and assistance as possible in order to support their children. We took on board however the point made by the officers at the meeting that when coming up with the proposals they were constrained by the fact that much of the budget is taken up with statutory provision. Consequently there is limited room for manoeuvre in making savings elsewhere. The number of SEND Home to School Transport places required also continues to grow significantly due to recent legislative changes.
5. In light of the financial pressures that the County Council continues to face, the Committee reluctantly supported the proposal to charge for SEND Post-16 to 18 students, subject to some caveats. We hope that every effort will be made to protect families on low incomes and that the Children and Young People's Service Directorate has exhausted all avenues in making alternative savings that would have a less direct impact on frontline service provision. I note that with respect to proposal three, the Executive has asked that the Director of Children and Young People's Services and the Executive Member to set a rate for the proposed enhanced Parental Transport Allowance, subject to consultation. The point was made at our committee that even a rate above 45p per mile would likely generate savings to the County Council as it would reduce the need for alternative transport to be provided as more parents would take up this offer.
6. The point was also made at our meeting that the County Council should continue to ramp up lobbying of government to make Ministers understand the difficulty in running these kind of services in a sparsely populated county like ours. The

legislative changes that led to the substantial increase in demand for SEND Home to School Transport in the county brought no extra funding for us and still doesn't.

Adult Learning and Skills Service and Post Implementation Action Plan

7. The Committee received an update report from the Adult Learning and Skills Service. We suggested a number of areas to be taken on board to build upon the existing improvements, including mentoring to ensure weaker teaching staff can improve. We also suggested putting in place Student Forums so that learners feel more involved in shaping their learning experience. Retention rates are likely to improve if learners are asked about what they enjoy or don't enjoy about the class, what made them join the course and what if any improvements they would like to see made. Involving learners more generally will help and we heard that the best teachers currently do this. More group activities and less 'chalk and talk' will also help engage learners.
8. We were pleased to note that a more thorough process of induction is being put in place to try to ensure that learners are on the right course and get the right level of support. There is also a new focus on reducing drop-out rates, by ensuring that discussions are held at the earliest opportunity with learners if they start failing to turn up to their course.
9. We have previously asked for a Member from the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be appointed to the ALSS governance group set up to drive forward improvements. We have asked for a decision to be made on this soon.
10. A progress update will be provided to the Committee in October.

Apprenticeships

11. An update on the County Council's activities on apprenticeships and other employment support initiatives relating to the government's national reforms to apprenticeships was provided at the meeting.
12. We discussed the government's new national arrangements for apprenticeships effective from last April. The apprenticeship levy and associated public sector apprenticeship target is posing a challenge to the County Council. This is due to the fact that the North Yorkshire economy has close to full employment in some areas and the fact that the part-time workforce makes the target and therefore full levy recovery unachievable. To recover the full levy would entail taking on around 600 apprentices which is well beyond the numbers available for work in the North Yorkshire economy.
13. We felt though that the County Council should exploit the government funding as best as it can by setting aspirational targets for each directorate to take on a set number of apprenticeships each year. For some directorates this would be higher than others due to the nature of their work. We were pleased to hear for example that the Health and Adult Services Directorate ensures that all of its care and support recruits at levels two and three will be apprentices. The target for the

Children's and Young People's Service Directorate would need to be lower due to the fact that schools make their own spending decisions.

Future items

14. The following items will be brought to our next committee meeting on 12 July 2018:
 - Highways Maintenance Contract - the annual report on actions being put in place by Ringway to improve performance and communications;
 - Highways England - annual report;
 - Road casualties – the road casualty figures in 2017 and update on the work of the 95Alive Partnership
 - 20s Plenty For Us - overview of the work of the campaign group for 20mph to become the default speed limit on residential and urban streets

15. The task group undertaking the Vehicle Activated Speed Sign review is hoping to be able to present its findings to the committee meeting in July. Currently parishes in North Yorkshire are being consulted as to whether they would be interested in purchasing and maintaining Vehicle Activated Speed Signs or Speed Indicator Devices. I encourage all those Members due to attend meetings with their parishes in the next few days to ask them to complete the survey if they have not already done so as the deadline for responses is 21 May 2018.

County Councillor Mike Jordan
Chairman

Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
County Hall
Northallerton

3 May 2018