



Committee and Date
Cabinet
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Item

Public



Unsafe Walking Routes Policy

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Kirstie Hirst-Knight		

1. Synopsis

Cabinet is requested to approve the Unsafe Walking Routes Policy which replaces the current Extremely Hazardous Routes Policy. (Appendix A).

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Council has a statutory duty, under the Education Act 1996, to provide home to school transport for eligible children and is required, amongst other things, to have a policy in place to determine if a route is considered unsafe for a child to walk and therefore whether transport should be provided.
- 2.2. The Council's current policy "Extremely Hazardous Routes", which deals with eligibility, has not been reviewed since 2001.
- 2.3.
- 2.4. The current policy has been reviewed and amended to ensure that the Council's statutory duty is met. The revised policy now includes accident data, gap analysis, road crossings and an updated traffic count criteria.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Cabinet to adopt the revised policy (Appendix A).

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

(NB This will include the following: Impact on Children and Vulnerable Adults, Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community and other Consultation)

4.1 An internal initial screening ESHIA was carried out ahead of the required public consultation, and indicated a neutral impact across Protected Characteristic groupings, with neutral to low positive impact for the groupings of Age, Disability, Pregnancy and Maternity, Sex, and Social Inclusion. This assessment was made in the light of complementary assessments carried out for School Streets policy work and for Active Travel initiatives. Following the public consultation exercise, the impacts remain as predicted but should be kept under review. There is potential for further positive impacts arising where this policy links in with other parallel policy work around road safety and health and wellbeing of children, young people and their families and carers.

4.2 With the renaming of the policy as the Unsafe Walking Routes Assessment policy, this will bring clarity and reassurance to people in the above Protected Characteristic groupings, particularly families and carers of children and their younger siblings. This will of itself present as a predicted positive impact in terms of equality and health and wellbeing for the above groupings.

4.3 As the policy will be reviewed each year in line with national guidance, and as any subsequent changes would be reflected in an amended policy, which would be subject to the same consultation process, this presents timely opportunities to monitor the policy for impact in terms of equality, social inclusion, and health and wellbeing. Additionally, the numbers and type of applications will be monitored each year to identify if any positive or negative impact has been identified. The Council is also remaining abreast of and contributing to national good practice, particularly in shared learning with other rural and regional unitary authorities.

4.4 It is anticipated that there will be a neutral to low positive impact on Health & Wellbeing, as the proposed policy will aid consideration of safer walking routes to and from school sites. As the policy will facilitate the encouragement of active travel to school, this presents potential benefits for children, young people and their families and carers. By encouraging active travel, pupils will not only feel ready to learn, but they will lead more physically active lives, which leads to improved mental health. Feedback from town and parish councils and interest groups also included suggestions for improvements in road safety eg 20mph speed limits and consideration about addressing pavement hazards, which if carried out as identified activity in specific locations alongside the implementation of this Council-wide policy would again lead to positive impacts in terms of health and well being across groupings.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. It is anticipated that based on current and previous applications there would be no financial impact on the Council either positive or negative as assessed against the new policy. We have benchmarked some of our recent cases against the new policy and it has not affected the outcome.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. A “no effect” outcome is expected against energy and fuel consumption, renewable energy generation, carbon offsetting and climate change adaptation as it is not anticipated that any additional pupils will be entitled to transport under the revised policy.

7. Background

- 7.1. Following an Ombudsman’s review, the Council was required to update its current policy in line with statutory guidance. Local Authorities have a statutory duty under the Education Act 1996 to provide home to school transport for eligible children (as defined by Section 508B of the Act). The Act specifies that one of the categories of eligible children for whom transport must be provided, is defined as “children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest suitable school because the nature of the route is deemed unsafe to walk” (Department for Education Statutory Guidance 2014 – Appendix E).
- 7.2. In light of the above a draft policy was prepared and a period of public consultation was undertaken.
- 7.3. The public consultation ran from 3rd January 2023 to 10th February 2023. The intended audience was:
 - Existing pupils and their families
 - The whole community
 - Elected members
 - Schools and Colleges
 - Parent Advocacy Groups
 - Town and Parish Councils
- 7.4. During the public consultation, several responses were received which have been collated at Appendix D. There were a number of comments that specifically related to general road safety issues, such as road speed, zebra crossings etc. which fall outside of this policy so we will refer these to our Road Safety Team. The consultation responses did not result in a change to the draft policy.
- 7.5. The new policy updates the wording from “extremely hazardous routes” to “unsafe walking routes” in line with statutory guidance.
- 7.6. As also referred to in the statutory guidance, the Road Safety GB Assessment of Walked Routes to School Guidelines April 2021 produced by ROSPA were taken into account when updating the policy.
- 7.7. There were several factors taken into consideration as part of the current Extremely Hazardous Routes policy, however these were not explicitly listed within

that policy so the revised version has now clearly labelled all areas which may or may not be taken into account when determining Unsafe Walking routes.

- 7.8. The policy will now include review of accident data from the previous 3 years and consultation with the Council's Road Safety team when a pupil is required to cross a road.

8. Additional Information

- 8.1 Cornwall, Staffordshire, Herefordshire & Warwickshire are some of the other Local Authority's that have already updated their policies and they have been considered when drafting our revised policy as set out in Appendix A.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. The policy has been updated in line with our statutory duty and it is not anticipated that there will be any material impact on the numbers of pupils entitled to transport under the existing policy.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Road Safety GB Guidelines

Home to School Statutory Guidance

Local Member: *All, county wide*

Appendices

Appendix A - Unsafe Walking Routes Assessment Policy

Appendix B – ESHIA

Appendix C – Road Safety GB Guidelines

Appendix D – Consultation Responses

Appendix E – Home to School Statutory Guidance