



**Committee and Date**

Council

21 March 2024

Item

Public



## Post 16 Transport Task and Finish Group: Update Report and Next Steps

<b>Responsible Officer:</b>		David Shaw – Assistant Director of Education and Achievement James Willocks – Passenger Transport Group Manager	
email:	<a href="mailto:david.shaw@shropshire.gov.uk">david.shaw@shropshire.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:james.willocks@shropshire.gov.uk">james.willocks@shropshire.gov.uk</a>	Tel:	01743 256479 01743 252474
<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):</b>		Ian Nellins Kirsty Hurst-Knight	
<b>Task and Finish Group Chair:</b>		Ian Nellins	

**1.0 Executive Summary**

1.1 Council, at its meeting on the 14 December 2023 passed a Motion that commissioned a task and finish group to look into how the Council could promote fairness and inclusivity by ensuring that all students, regardless of their economic backgrounds or location, have equal access to education without an unfair financial burden of excessive transportation costs

1.2 This paper sets out the findings and recommendations of this task and finish group.

**2.0 Report**

2.1 Members of the task and finish group, supporting officers, and Member observers have met to discuss the motion and work through the relevant information to understand the issues, options and confirm next steps and emerging recommendations.

2.2 As part of this work they considered two core statutory documents which are useful reference regarding what the Council must provide in terms of post 16 Transport.

- [Travel to school for children of compulsory school age \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

- [Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

2.3 The group also considered the local situation in Shropshire, particularly in relation to the public transport network, and how the network would look without funding support. They discussed the challenges of living in rural areas and recognised that one of the biggest challenges relating to equity of access was public transport network coverage.

### **3.0 Next steps and recommendations**

3.1 The group confirmed that the first steps should be to meet the requirements of the Motion. Members reflected that the conversation was positive, and solution focused, but they were at risk of moving beyond the scope of their work.

#### **Raising awareness of options and informing expectations**

3.2 That a One Stop Shop approach should be considered, where parents, carers, students and colleges could go to for advice, guidance and information that helped set out options and provided signposting in relation to post-16 transport.

3.3 The Passenger Transport Group Manager should talk to the Enhanced Bus Partnership Group (providers) about the challenges, opportunities and options relating to post-16 transport.

#### **Developing a clearer understanding of the costs and challenges**

3.4 A further mapping exercise should be carried out to provide a clearer understanding of current and future demand for post-16 transport taking account of small area statistics on 16 to 19 demographics (current and projected for the coming years), urban centres, Further Education (FE) college locations, and public transport routes, and should be integrated with data that is informing place planning.

3.5 Work should be completed to develop an understanding of the likely scale, costs and options to cover point 2 of the motion in the immediate term, whilst the wider work of negotiating with other bus companies is undertaken as a longer-term piece of work.

2. *that the total annual cost of a Post-16 student's transport, when using school buses and public transport, shall not exceed the expense of a single annual Arriva student bus pass within Shropshire.*

#### **Future funding for the public transport network**

3.6 The Department of Transport support ends on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. The Council should take an improved coverage option back to The Department for Transport to pursue future funding.

#### **Working with the further education colleges**

3.7 Improved data connectivity with colleges should continue to be progressed. This will help to develop understanding from the data and insights they hold on where their students travel in from. The group were mindful that next year's cohort would be known, shortly.

3.8 The Council should explore the opportunity to make available and visualise data that the Council holds and has access to, identifying the potential demand in

communities to indicate where there are young people in the relevant age groups in the current and future years. This might help colleges who are working to expand or target their own offers and how transport could be a feature. It could also be something that the council could provide as part of a commercial offer – either for a fee, or as part of a package that will deliver identified outcomes.

- 3.9 Where there are specific issues related to access from communities and it is known that a further education college is providing transport to a nearby settlement, the Council could ask the college whether they would either extend the route or provide a new service where there was demonstrated demand. As well as helping address access there would be a mutual benefit of increasing the colleges enrolment numbers.

#### 4.0 **Manging the flow of the work**

- 4.1 The group identified three stages to the work.

**Short term** = One Stop Shop scoping exercise potentially moving to implementation,

**Medium term** = Opportunities to speak to colleges, and completing the data and mapping exercise for the realistic establishment of numbers and costs

**Long term** = Public transport infrastructure in Shropshire, developing a more integrated transport offer, making the link to the Economic Growth Strategy and employers and FE/HE (Higher Education) provision

- 4.2 The Group felt that the aim should be to get the short term element of this work underway for September 2024 for this years cohort, or January 2025 at the latest.

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

**Local Member:** All

**Appendices** [Please list the titles of Appendices]