
QUALIFYING DISTANCE FOR THE TRANSPORT TO SCHOOL OF CHILDREN - CONSULTATION

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Members' comments in respect of proposals being put forward by the County Council to alter the "qualifying distance" criteria for:
- (i) children of compulsory school age (11-16) attending denominational secondary schools on grounds of their faith
 - (ii) children of compulsory school age (11-16) attending selective (grammar) schools; and
 - (iii) children of compulsory school age (5-16) whose families purchase a spare (concessionary) seat on contracted transport.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The County Council provides free home to school transport to denominational secondary schools for children of compulsory school age (11-16) resident in Essex who meet the qualifying distance criteria and who attend the designated denominational school of their faith or a nearer denominational school of their faith as measured by the nearest road route.

The designated denominational school for the home address of the child is determined by the County Council in liaison with the relevant Diocese.

Evidence that the child has been admitted to the faith of the school attended is requested at the time of application for transport.

The qualifying distance criteria for children of compulsory school age (11-16) is:

- 3 miles or more as measured by the nearest available route.

- 2.2 For children of compulsory school age (11-16) resident in Essex attending selective (grammar) schools the County Council provides free transport for those who live 3 miles or more from the school as measured by the nearest available route whose family is in receipt of income support or qualifying benefits whose income is at or below the level that would qualify for Income Based Job Seekers Allowance.

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- 2.3 The County Council sells spare (concessionary) seats to parents for a charge. For families on Income Support or qualifying benefits whose income is at or below the level that would qualify for Income Based Job Seekers Allowance this charge is waived and the spare (concessionary) seat is provided free.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 County Council budgets are coming under increased pressure as a consequence of which all areas of service provision are being reviewed with the aim of ensuring that levels of expenditure can be contained within the levels of budget provision that are expected to be available in the future.
- 3.2 The County Council is therefore consulting on changes to current policies on the basis set out below. Responses are requested by 30 September 2003.

(1) Proposed policy for the transport of children to denominational secondary schools

From January 2004 it is proposed that free transport to denominational secondary schools will cease. However, transport will continue to be provided on payment of a charge for children of compulsory school age (11-16) resident in Essex attending the designated denominational secondary school of their faith who meet the qualifying distance criteria.

In addition transport will be provided, again on payment of a charge, where the denominational secondary school attended is closer than the designated denominational secondary school as measured by the nearest road route for those who meet the qualifying distance criteria. Charges will be payable termly in advance.

The following level of charge is proposed:

- £100 a term

For families on income support or qualifying benefits whose income is at or below the level that would qualify for Income Based Job Seekers Allowance it is proposed that the charge would be reduced to:

- £40 a term

The charge will be waived for those children attending the denominational secondary school of their faith where there is no closer school to their home address as measured by the nearest road route.

(2) Proposed policy for the transport of children to selective (grammar) schools

From January 2004 it is proposed that free transport to selective (grammar) schools for children of compulsory school age (11-16) where families are on income support or qualifying benefits whose income is at or below the level that would qualify for Income Based Job Seekers Allowance will cease and that transport would only be provided on payment of a charge. The proposed level of charge which would be payable termly in advance is:

- £40 a term

(3) Proposed policy for children of compulsory school age (5-16) whose families purchase a spare (concessionary) seat on contracted transport.

From January 2004 it is proposed that the charge payable termly in advance for a spare (concessionary) seat for children aged 5-16 would be set at:

- £100 a term

For families with children of compulsory school age (5-16) on income support or qualifying benefits whose income is at or below the level that would qualify for Income Based Job Seekers Allowance this charge would be reduced to:

- £40 a term

These proposals if implemented will have implications from January 2004 onwards for parents of children of compulsory school age (11-16) attending a denominational secondary or selective school together with all applications for a spare (concessionary) seat for children aged 5-16 and will change the transport eligibility criteria as set out in the Education in Essex 2004/2005 booklets.

4 OFFICER COMMENT

- 4.1 The County Council have been unable to specify the number of children likely to be affected by this proposal resident within the Rochford District, although they say that there are likely to be children in the District attending denominational schools or selective schools who will be affected.
- 4.2 The proposed changes in policy may result in more traffic generated movements by parents and potentially more problems that may have to be solved through decriminalised parking

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Risk

Nothing specifically for the District Council, although this proposed change of policy has clearly been prompted by resource issues at the County Council.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This extension of qualifying distances may result in more traffic generated movements as parents transport their children to school.

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That its views on the County Council's proposals as set out in this report be determined. (CE)

Paul Warren

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Background Papers:

Letter from County Cllr. Mrs Iris Pummell, Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools, Essex County Council dated July 2003

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