

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 26 th February, 2019
Report Subject	Flintshire County Council's Hazardous Routes
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside
Report Author	Chief Officer (Streetscene and Transportation)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Flintshire County Council, along with all local authorities, are under a legal duty to assess the travel needs of learners who walk to and from school.

The Council's current Transport Policy permits free school transport for pupils of statutory school age, where the route to school is considered to be hazardous and therefore not of a suitable nature to permit safe access by means of walking.

Whilst there are a number of provisions associated with the transport of pupils, the focus of this report is to inform Members of the process utilised to define a route as being hazardous, whilst also seeking to update Members on the Council's current list of hazardous routes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Scrutiny note the Council's statutory duty to assess the travel needs of school pupils under the Learner Travel Guidance and the process used to define Hazardous Routes to School.
2	That Scrutiny notes the current list of Hazardous Routes to School and approves advertising the routes on the Council's website.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE AUTHORITY'S STATUTORY DUTY AND PROCESS UTILISED TO ASSESS THE TRAVEL NEEDS OF PUPILS.
1.01	<p>Flintshire County Council, along with all local authorities, are under a legal duty to assess the travel needs of learners who walk to and from school.</p> <p>The Council's Transport Policy (Appendix 1) dictates that free school transport will be provided to the nearest eligible site of education in the following circumstances:-</p> <p>The child resides in excess of 2 miles (for primary school pupils) and 3 miles (for secondary pupils) from their nearest appropriate school;</p> <p>or</p> <p>If the route is deemed to be 'hazardous'.</p>
1.02	<p>In accordance with the Learner Travel Statutory Provision, a route can only be defined as 'acceptable' (i.e. non-hazardous) if any of the following outline criteria are met:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A continuous adequate footway exists on roads which carry medium to heavy traffic flow, or;• "Step Offs" are available on roads which have low traffic flows but adequate sight lines are present to provide sufficient advanced warning to drivers and pedestrians, or;• Roads with very low traffic flows with no "step offs" but sufficient sight lines exist to provide adequate advanced warning.
1.03	<p>The Learner Travel Guidance places a legal obligation on local authorities to assess routes in accordance with a Specified Risk Assessment (enclosed within Appendix 2 for information).</p> <p>Typical considerations contained within the assessment include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traffic flows & collision history• Footpath provision• Crossing provision• Lighting• Social danger
1.04	<p>Following an initial application by the representing parent or guardian, all requests for transport provision are initially assessed by the Council's Integrated Transport Unit (ITU) in order to ascertain if the distance criteria has been met. For those pupils who reside in excess of 2 miles for Primary School pupils and 3 miles for Secondary pupils, transport provision will be provided irrespective of whether a route is deemed to be hazardous.</p>

1.05	Should an application be made on the grounds of a route being hazardous (for a pupil who resides within the specified distance criteria), a detailed assessment will be undertaken by a technically qualified officer based in the Streetscene and Transportation Portfolio, utilising the specified risk assessment referenced above. It should be noted that applications will only be accepted for walked routes to the nearest most appropriate school and routes to other schools will not be assessed and free school transport will not be provided, under the current policy.
1.06	Should improvements to the existing infrastructure be highlighted as a result of the assessment process, opportunity may exist to apply for Welsh Government (WG) funding in order to achieve a safe walking route for pupils.
1.07	Opportunities to improve infrastructure through the acquisition of developer contributions are also explored. The funding can be utilised to improve both the existing network and provide safe access on the new development itself, thus future proofing the safety and wellbeing of the County's most vulnerable users, whilst also contributing to the WG's vision to improve levels of walking and cycling under the Active Travel Act.
1.08	In order to provide parents and guardians with a clear understanding of the options available to them when choosing a school for their child, it is proposed to publish the Council's list of previously defined hazardous routes on the Council's website. A list of the existing routes, defined as hazardous, following a risk assessment by Council Officers, are enclosed within Appendix 3 for information.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Staff resource required for the processing of applications and completion of technical assessments.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	With Cabinet Member.
3.02	Environment Overview and Scrutiny will consider the matter at their February 2019 committee meeting.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	All assessments are completed by a technically qualified officer via the use of the Learner Travel Guidance specified risk assessment.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Flintshire County Council’s Transport Policy.
5.02	Appendix 2 – Learner Travel Guidance Specified Risk Assessment.
5.03	Appendix 3 – List of Flintshire County Council’s Hazardous Routes.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>None.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Stephen O Jones Telephone: 01352 704700 E-mail: stephen.o.jones@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>(1) ITU – Integrated Transport Unit. (2) WG – Welsh Government.</p>