

# Home to School Transport Policy

Discussion – Monday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2023

- Cllr Jackie Charlton – Cabinet Member for a greener Powys
- John Forsey – Senior Manager Fleet and Corporate Transport
- Matt Perry – Head of Highways, Transport & Recycling



# Background

- The Home to School Transport Policy needs to be updated to align with the School Admission arrangements so that applicants can make informed choices.
- The Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) will come into force in January 2026. At this point, we will be able to sell 'spare seats' which will achieve the motion set out in Full Council in October 2022.
- By aligning the school admission arrangements and school transport policy, we will provide for a more transparent, cost effective and ultimately sustainable service.



# Key areas for Scrutiny discussion

- To seek Scrutiny's views around the current Home to School transport Policy with a focus on the two following matters:
  - Home to School Transport Policy aligned to our Schools Admission Arrangements
  - The Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) will come into force in January 2026. At this point, we will be able to sell 'spare seats' which will achieve the motion set out in Full Council in October 2022.

Comments from this Scrutiny discussion will then be taken into consideration when preparing the report that feeds into Cabinet for approval.



# Home to School Transport budget

We have the largest home to school transport service in Wales and transport around 5,500 learners to school / college each day. That's about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the entire school population. This costs around £11m per annum and can be broken down as follows:-

- 219 Dedicated Mainstream Home to School Transport Routes
- 62 Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transport Routes
- In addition, around 1000 learners travel to secondary school / college on public transport (local bus services)

The average cost per mainstream school contract (taxi – 83 seat coach) is circa £200 per day.

The average cost per ALN contract (taxi – 16 seat minibus) is circa £215 per day.

The daily spend on school transport for the 23/24 academic year equates to circa c.£59,000 per day!



# Transport provision based on catchment

Matters for consideration	Issues
<p>Parents would be able to see on a map which school we would provide transport to if they applied for a place in that particular school.</p>	<p>The catchment school will not necessarily be the nearest school</p>
<p>If a school closes as part of the Transforming Education programme, the new catchment school(s) would be defined.</p>	<p>In the event of a school closure, parents may wish to choose another school which could potentially be closer than the catchment school. Council would need to consider this aspect as part of the closure process</p>
<p>Clarity will allow parents to make informed choices and potentially reduce the number of appeals.</p>	<p>If parents decide to go outside the catchment area, then this could result in no transport being offered.</p>
<p>By clarifying the policy and removing the word 'nearest' it would provide for a clear and consistent approach.</p>	<p>Therefore, by offering transport to the catchment school only, would enable a consistent approach to providing home to school transport to all communities in Powys.</p>



# What is PSVAR?

The Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) applies to all new public service vehicles (buses or coaches):

- Introduced since 31 December 2000
- With a capacity exceeding 22 passengers.

Under powers contained within the Equality Act 2010 the government has made regulations that require all new land-based public transport vehicles (trains, taxis, buses and coaches) to be accessible to disabled people, including those who need to remain in wheelchairs.

The Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) will come fully into force in January 2026. At this point, we will be able to sell 'spare seats' which will achieve the motion set out in Full Council in October 2022.



# Purchase of spare seats

Matters for consideration	Issues
We will be able to maximise any spare capacity on contracted school busses	There may be occasions where there is no spare capacity on the bus or that the seat may have to be relinquished if the spare seat is required by a statutory learner
Learners who live under the statutory distance will be able to make use of the service	Need to consider the overlap with service transport provision.
Would we sell a seat for those out of catchment?	This would provide for an element of inconsistency and potentially undermine the schools admission policy.
Will generate an amount of income	The cost of the seat is not fully recovered from the charge that is made. The average cost to transport a learner to school is around £1500 per year. The charge for a vacant seat was around £400 per year. This needs to be considered against the transport is running anyway ie marginal costs.
Reduced numbers of parents that follow the school bus to their school	Reduced carbon footprint etc, noting that the bus will not divert off a route to collect a Vacant Seat passenger



# Questions?

