

Place Scrutiny Panel Working Party

Meeting 13.12.24

1. Meeting attended by David Branson, John Kabuye and David Jackson. Feedback from above was given.
2. David Jackson David had called at Beverley Park School, a special school in Hemlington. They had changed the school opening times to 8am to 2pm to help with transport provision and this had worked out very well. They had built up their own transport provision and this was now very good.
John Kabuye John had visited Trinity Academy and they were not really satisfied with the service at present. In particular, they were concerned that the council was running a separate service to other councils and that the buses were not running very full. The school ran a bus where the council was unable to and the parents were supposed to pay the school. However, the school did not know who was entitled to free transport so they were unable to chase up students who had not paid. There was evidence that some parents were receiving financial help with travel but not using it for that purpose.
David Branson David had not visited any other school since the last meeting but was arranging to go to Sunnyside. The feedback so far had been mixed, with Holmwood School not very happy with the service but Kings Academy a little more content.
3. There was a discussion about the nature of the problem of home to school transport. It was agreed that the group need more clarification on the way in which money was allocated to pay for the service. The report from the LGA produced in 2018 identified pre 16 SEND students as the main area of concern as in this case there had been a gradual increase in student numbers and a sharp increase in unit costs.
4. The group considered whether the schools should be given more responsibility for arranging home to school transport. Also, there was a need to coordinate the role of Children Services in allocating SEND status and the creation of Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) with the Education Department who were responsible for the provision of home to school transport. There had also to be a clear link with the schools involved. The need for better special school provision was also discussed.
5. It was agreed that we need to get further clarification these matter by talking again to the head of the Integrated Transport Unit. We devised a series of question that we would need to ask (see appendix).

The meeting ended at 11.am

Appendix

Questions to be asked;

1. How is funding obtained for home to school transport and what are the amounts received by Middlesbrough council?
2. Why are the academies not responsible for the provision of home to school transport for children attending their school?
3. Who provides the transport facilities for students, the council or private contractors?
4. Do some schools run their own transport provision and if so how is it funded?
5. How could we integrate the decision making of Children Services with the Education Department to ensure that transport provision was taken into consideration when allocating SEND status?
6. Can the council insist on academies taking specific SEND students when the transport provision suggest they are the best alternative?
7. Is it possible to invest in more special school provision?
8. What are the commissioning costs for school transport provision?