

Question: CQ11.01

Cabinet – 3 March 2022

Re: Agenda item 11 – Homelessness Prevention Grant 22/23

Question submitted by: Councillor Marley Bennett

Please could the Cabinet Member explain how the Government currently allocates funding for this, and how our ability to tackle homelessness could be improved by more stable funding arrangements?

These questions received a verbal reply at the meeting.

Question: CQ14.01

Cabinet – 3 March 2022

Re: Agenda item 14 - Housing Revenue account (HRA) Debt Write Off

Question submitted by: Councillor Marley Bennett

'Please can the Cabinet Member provide further details about how this ties in with our ethical debt collection policy'

These questions received a verbal reply at the meeting.

Question: CQ15.01

Cabinet – 3 March 2022

Re: Agenda item 15 – Metrobus upgrade package

Question submitted by: Councillor David Wilcox

I support the proposed changes in Hengrove at Bamfield – an extra bus stop is pragmatic and useful, and the changes to Stoke Lane to make the junction safer and to give buses priority to pull out.

Question: If the gap between stops of 1.5km along Bamfield is deemed too big, then can the 5.6km gap between Bond Street and Begbrooke stops on the M1 & M3 route be improved by installing a Metrobus stop at Eastville Junction 2?

These questions received a verbal reply at the meeting.

Question: CQ16.01

Cabinet – 3 March 2022

Re: Agenda item 16 - Portway Park & Ride Car Park Expansion

Question submitted by: Councillor David Wilcox

I welcome the proposed much needed extra parking capacity at the Portway Park and Ride site, especially once both the new station and the Brabazon Arena is opened – hopefully later this summer.

Question: I note that the recently opened Park and Ride site at Yate is offering both 38 electrical vehicle charging points and a 40 space two-tier covered cycle storage facility. This promotes multi-modal use for the park ride sites, what consideration was given to offering a similar facilities at the Portway site, please?

These questions received a verbal reply at the meeting.

Question: PQ17.01

Cabinet – 3 March 2022

Re: Agenda item 17 – Home to School Travel DPS Framework Re-commission

Question submitted by: Jen Smith

Having had some previous personal experience with HTST, there has been occasions whereby my child who has fit the lawful criteria has been turned down for transport in a manner more befitting of the DWP over arbitrarily deciding who can physically walk and who cannot - refusing to take neurodivergence and safety into consideration.

How are disabled pupils legally entitled to transport and who need this to get to school going to be protected from individual decisions made by council officers who do not understand what it is like to be disabled and refuse to take evidence into consideration?

Answer

The DfE Home to School Travel Guidance document sets out the duty for the Local Authority in supporting parents of children within certain criteria.

Individual officers do not make decisions around the eligibility of children for home to school travel. Children with an EHCP are eligible where there is documented need for support with travel. The EHCP is an evidence-based document requiring the expertise of professionals across Education, Health and Social Care and the input of children and families themselves.

Recommendations related to the requirement for travel support are taken from this document and not solely by council officers. There is also an appeal process within the BCC travel policy.

We will continue to review the effectiveness of the Home-School Transport service, and engage with other local authorities to take forward best practice for the efficient running of the service.

Question: PQ17.02&03

Cabinet – 3 March 2022

Re: Agenda item 17 – Home to School Travel DPS Framework Re-commission

Questions submitted by: Hayley Hemming

Competitive tender and well thought out routes that limit travel to 45 minutes are a welcome relief for parents and carers to read; current routes can often be lengthy and isolating for children forced to travel long distances due to lack of suitable provision in Bristol.

1. My first question relates to a statement in Appendix K, P.4, which reads: “As we would expect, parents and carers want the best and safest means of transport to school for their children. This leads to a demand for taxis with an Escort to take their children to school and to resistance in enabling more independent travel as their children grow older.”

Bristol City Council are legally obliged to transport children and young people to their nearest suitable school whilst complying with their statutory safeguarding duties (which may include the use of an escort).

Why has Bristol City Council been providing transport in taxis and escorts for children and young people who are not legally entitled to them but where they have been “demanded”?

Answer

Bristol City Council is not providing travel for children who are not eligible.

DfE Home to School Travel Guidance and Bristol City Council Home to School Travel guidance does not specify whether travel should be through a taxi or a bus, or through a walking buddy for example. The duty for the Local Authority is to support eligible children through the most appropriate means, with a view to safety and independence.

Issues occasionally arise when parents often do not want arrangements to change as the abilities of their children change. After some years of travel with a taxi and escort, it can be difficult to convince parents that their children can manage their travel through a more independent means. Bristol City Council historically provided travel training through schools but has not had a substantial offer that could develop a child’s and parent’s confidence in travelling more independently.

We want to ensure the Home School Transport Service efficiently and effectively delivers on our statutory responsibilities. We will continue to review the service, and engage with other local authorities to take forward best practice.

2. My second question is around the independent travel training proposals. Bristol City Council states that private transport, such as taxis, are only provided where, “there is no other suitable choice” for learners over 16 years old with SEND and that currently independent travel is encouraged via annual EHCP reviews and personal budgets and partially funded financial assistance.

(www.bristol.gov.uk/schools-learning-early-years/travel-support-for-students-16-and-over)

Is it envisaged that young people with SEND will self refer (via school/college etc) into independent travel training where they believe it will be beneficial for them or are Bristol City Council asking that every young person with SEND/an ECHP be ‘assessed’ for their suitability to potentially travel independently?

Answer

We want both options to be available.

It is intended that parents can self-refer to independent travel training when they feel their child can begin to learn to travel more independently; but also that the annual EHCP assessment will review the requirements of children with a view to supporting the most independent means of travel for them according to their individual need.

This may propose travel training as a precursor to a different means of travel to school.

Question: PQ18.01

Cabinet – 3 March 2022

Re: Agenda item 18 - Grant determination for the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme 2022

Question submitted by: Jen Smith

Some Bristol children and young people with Send who are entitled to FSM are not receiving their entitlement at all.

These pupils may be off rolled, children missing education, receiving ALP, long term Ill, stuck at home waiting for a school space or provision, or attending an independent specialist.

These pushed out pupils are facing multiple disadvantage and blocked from receiving their entitlement - how exactly will this benefit these forgotten children?

Answer

All HAF funded activities must be inclusive – and organisations are required to demonstrate their alignment with the Belonging Strategy.

In 2021/22 alternative learning providers received funding to provide activity for children outside mainstream education. These included Learning Partnership West, and Education First. We will continue and build on this model.

Activity packs and food parcels were also made available to children too unwell to attend face-to-face activities. WECIL, Parent Carer Forum, Heswell Disabled Holiday Camps and Avon Centre also received funding to work with children with Education Health and Care Plans.

We will be increasing our engagement with specialist and ALP providers in 2022/23 to ensure more young people can access holiday provision. Specific work is also being developed to meet the needs of refugee and asylum seeker children. This includes targeted work through the Families in Focus and youth services teams.