

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MONDAY 24 MARCH 2002 AT 2.00 P.M.

Agenda Item
No.

11

ROUND DIAMOND PRIMARY SCHOOL, STEVENAGE: school transport

Report of the Director of Children Schools and Families

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Executive Member: Robert Gordon

1. Purpose of report

To ask Cabinet whether or not it wishes to refine the decision of the former Education Committee, made in April 2000, in relation to the provision of transport for pupils when the school moves from its existing site to a new site within the Great Ashby development.

2. Conclusion

The offer of free transport to pupils currently living within the Great Ashby development does not appear to be compatible with moving the school within that development. Cabinet may or may not wish to refine the previous decision which included them in the offer of free transport.

3. Background

- 3.1 The former Education Committee agreed in April 2000 to publish statutory proposals to move Round Diamond school to a new site. They were subsequently confirmed by the School Organisation Committee (SOC). The school's move has been delayed by one year, largely due to town planning difficulties. It will be ready for a September 2003 start and this change of date has been confirmed by the SOC.
- 3.2 The Education Committee also decided at its meeting in April 2000 that free transport would be offered to relocating pupils. The intent was to provide this transport to the traditional school community whose home to school journeys would be more difficult once the school moved to its new location. An extract of the relevant Committee minute is provided at the end of this report.
- 3.3 Since then, and partly because of the delay in the opening of the new school building, a significant number of houses have been completed in Great Ashby and some pupils living on the estate now attend Round

Diamond School on its existing site. Their journeys, once the school is relocated, are unlikely to be more difficult and in most cases are likely to be easier (see map attached. Note: more housing has been developed than is shown on the map). It may not make sense to offer free transport to these pupils. The pros and cons of not doing so are:

Pros

- it is a common sense approach to changing circumstances
- there may be budgetary savings
- it would avoid some people from Great Ashby getting transport while others, in future, will not.

Cons

- some parents may be unhappy
- it represents a change to the original decision
- in practice some parents may not take up the offer and so the financial impact of the policy may be minimised.

- 3.4 Legal advice allows for a change to the previous decision in the manner described as it is in line with the original intention of that decision.

Financial implications

Current estimates of the long term cost of the transport offer, based on between a 60%-100% take up, range between £230,000 - £304,000 in the first year, declining in subsequent years. Provision has been made for this expenditure in the Home to School Transport budget. A more accurate estimate cannot be made until the level of actual demand and number of vehicles required is known. There may be some budgetary savings as a consequence of any change in an offer of transport. Approximately 60 pupils currently attending Round Diamond School live within the Great Ashby development.

Extract from Education Committee minutes for 12 April 2000

- “(4) That free return transport to the new site be provided for children on the roll of Round Diamond JMI School (including those allocated places in the nursery class) at the point of transfer, and the current (but not future) siblings.
- (5) (i) That free return transport be provided for the parents of children born prior to the date of site transfer and who will occupy a future place in the designated nursery class; and
- (ii) That free return transport be provided, for the first half-term following the site transfer, for parents of all other children on the roll of Round Diamond School at the point of transfer.”