Committee	Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report	Education Transport
Date of Meeting	19 March 2020
Author of Report	Bethan Griffith, Ancillary Services Manager
Relevant Officer	Garem Jackson, Head of Education
Relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor Cemlyn Rees Williams

1. Background

1.1 There is a statutory requirement on the Authority under the 'Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008' regulation http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2008/2/contents/enacted to provide free transport to learners who live in the County and who have registered in a school maintained by the Council under the following circumstances:

- Learners receiving primary education – for learners who live 2 miles or more from the school in their catchment area, or the nearest school (does not include nursery class pupils)
- Learners receiving secondary education – for learners under 16 years old who live 3 miles or more from the school in their catchment area, or the nearest school
- Learners with additional learning needs or disabilities under 16 years in accordance with the recommendations of the moderation panel.

The Authority is required to assess learner travel needs and the Schools' Transport Policy is based on these needs.

1.2 In addition to the statutory requirements, the Authority has discretion to provide other additional transport and Gwynedd have extended their policy to include the following:

- Free transport for reception class learners under the same conditions as primary age learners
- 16+ transport for a fee which is £120 term 1, £120 term 2 and £60 term 3
- Empty seats scheme (including nursery learners) for a termly fee of £31 within catchment area and £62 out of catchment area
- Free transport to Language Centres
- Free transport for additional educational learning and inclusion services

2.   How is transport arranged?

2.1   Applications for regular transport are made by parents wanting to use free transport by filling a form and sending it to the transport unit. For primary learners, a list will be provided to the bus company of eligible free transport learners. For secondary learners, a bus ticket will be provided to each learner which is shown to the bus company when travelling.

2.2   In circumstances where the needs of learners divert from the regular process, there will be an assessment of each individual learners needs. In the past, a taxi was provided almost automatically when an application was received and this might not have been the most cost efficient way of providing the service. By now, and by adopting Ffordd Gwynedd ethos, the process has been mapped and the Moderation Panel makes the decision on the appropriate transport to meet the learner's needs. Here, learners' needs are regularly assessed and transport arrangements adapted as the needs change.

2.3   An increase in demand has been seen for special transport to colleges on the basis of needs in 2018 and again in 2019. These applications have been approved by the Moderation Panel which shows that there is an increase in demand and that the current allocated budget is inadequate to meet the needs of these learners.

3.   Costs

3.1   In order to obtain value for money, transport contracts are re-tendered every 3 years. This is undertaken by individual areas and not all at once. The transportation unit have a re-tendering agenda.

3.2   If there are savings to be made through re-tendering, the savings are transferred to central funds. In the same way, any additional costs required as a result of re-tendering are provided by central funds. See appendix 1 for a summary of education transport costs.

3.3   Note that the heading where most expenditure has exceeded the allocated budget is:

- College transport –2019/20 budget is £206,110. Expenditure as at 1 February 2020 is £324,632.

Over the years, the Education Department have been making bids for additional resources to meet the demand, however by now, there is an expectation that the department manage the demand within the allocated budget.

3.4   In order to manage the expenditure, the following measures have been taken:

- 16+ Transport

- College Transport Users Forums arranged to understand the needs of customers
- Change in payment pattern from £100 per term to £120 term 1, £120 term 2 and £60 term 3. Note that the demand for transport is lower in term 3 than the other two terms.
- Facilitate easier payment methods for customers by introducing monthly direct debits
- Develop an e-ticket for users to receive directly to their smart phones
- Allocate transport budgets to individual services within education instead of being a central transport budget within education. This will ensure that service managers are better able to manage their budgets and that transport is a consideration when arranging education.
- Reconcile data available in ONE Transport to enable regular reports for service managers.

4. **Next Steps**
- Continue to assess specific routes to see if they can be provided in a more cost efficient way
- Provide regular reports to service managers on their transport expenditure
- Review ADY packages for each geographical area
- Investigate the reasons why there has been an increase in demand for college transport.