

Brighton & Hove City Council

Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

Agenda Item 82(a)

Subject: **Bus Travel for Young People**
Deputation referred from the Public Engagement meeting held on the 3 February 2022

Date of meeting: 15 March 2022

Report of: Executive Director for Governance, People & Resources

Contact Officer: **Name:** Mark Wall
Tel: 01273 291006
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Ward(s) affected: All

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 To receive the following deputation which was presented at and referred from the public engagement meeting held on the 3 February 2022.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee responds to the deputation either by noting it or where it is considered more appropriate, calls for an officer report on the matter which may give consideration to a range of options and writes to the deputation spokesperson setting out the committee's decision(s).

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 To receive the following deputation along with the extract from the public engagement meeting which is detailed in appendix 1:

Deputation concerning Bus Travel for Young People Spokesperson David Bailey

Class Divide is a grassroots campaign fighting to urgently bring attention and change to the deeply unjust educational attainment gap between young people from the communities of Whitehawk, Manor Farm and Bristol Estate and their counterparts in the rest of Brighton and Hove. The campaign is made up of parents, residents, experts and supporters who have experienced these problems or have expertise in education. For more information about the campaign see www.classdivide.co.uk.

My name is Dave Bailey, and I am a member of Class Divide. From January 2022 all children and young people under the age of 19 in Scotland have the right to free bus travel. In the recent past, both the Labour

Party and the Green Party have committed to a policy of free bus travel for children and young people in England.

Class Divide wants Brighton and Hove City Council to:

1. Commit to providing free bus travel policy for all residents of Brighton & Hove under the age of 17 by April 2023.
2. Instruct officers to produce a report that examines in detail the case for a free bus travel policy that accounts for the potential positive impact on young people's lives as well as the economic and environmental benefits to the city.
3. Investigate how such a policy can be implemented given how current bus services are funded in the city and identify any changes that would need to take place to implement a free bus travel policy for under 17s.
4. Bring together all providers of bus services in Brighton and Hove to discuss this policy and get concrete commitment from them to support changes necessary to enact it.

We know that the devastating cuts to local authority budgets mean that councillors have some very difficult funding decisions, however, we think that free bus travel for children would play a significant role in recovery from Covid, in both the boost it will give the local economy and the positive difference it will make to children, whose lives have been so badly impacted by the pandemic. It will also make a huge difference to families, who are facing the worst cost of living crisis since the 1980s.

Supporting information:

The case for this policy is overwhelmingly positive.

- Free bus travel has significant economic, social and environmental benefits.
- Our own research on this issue shows that free bus travel benefits all children as it promotes independence, improves personal safety, increases self-confidence and makes them more likely to spend time with friends.
- Free travel for children has particular benefits to children living in families where money and resources are tight by increasing opportunity and reducing inequality. For example, 'transport poverty' stops being a significant constraint on the lives of less affluent children. It reduces inequalities in access to education and allows families to make school choices based on preference and needs rather than transport affordability. It also makes access to leisure facilities, cultural and other opportunities that promote positive social and emotional development fairer and less tied to family income.
- In addition, free travel for those under 17 years of age would benefit everyone living in Brighton and Hove. As children use the bus more, parents and carers can use their cars less and this could have a positive impact on congestion and air quality in the city. Given that in 2020 it was reported that the area around Brighton's Clock Tower is the third-worst

location in England for Nitrogen Dioxide this is absolutely vital. Less short journeys in cars would be good for those who have no choice but to drive, like essential workers, tradespeople, delivery drivers and those with disabilities.

Supported by:

1. Charlie Goldsmith
3. Curtis James
5. Catherine Mercer

2. Lisa Petit
4. Will McInnees

Ward affected: All

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & MEMBERS MEETING

4.30pm 3 FEBRUARY 2022

VIRTUAL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Robins (Chair) Allcock, Appich, Atkinson, Bagaeen, Barnett, Brown, Childs, Clare, Davis, Deane, Druitt, Evans, Fishleigh, Gibson, Grimshaw, Henry, Hills, Hugh-Jones, Lloyd, Mac Cafferty, McNair, Meadows, Mears, Miller, Nemeth, Osborne, Peltzer Dunn, Powell, Shanks, Simson, C Theobald, Wilkinson, Williams and Yates.

PART ONE

11 DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- 11.1 The mayor noted that one deputation had been received from members of the public and invited Mr Bailey as the spokesperson for the deputation to join the meeting and address the council.
- 11.2 Mr. Bailey thanked the mayor and outlined the reasons for the deputation which sought the council's support to provide free bus travel in the city for young people who were in education. He stated that it would be a positive action to support those families who were struggling and promote independence and self-confidence in the young people. It would also benefit the environment with less car journeys taking place and he hoped that officers could work with local providers so that a report could be produced for consideration that would see free bus travel provided for young people.
- 11.3 Councillor Davis thanked Mr Bailey for presenting the deputation and noted that bus fares were not generally set by the council, although it did provide a subsidy for certain routes. However, the issues and potential benefits raised were something that the council recognised, and it was hoped to bring a new bus service improvement plan to committee in due course for approval. In the meantime, the cost of providing an additional subsidy to enable free bus travel was a significant budgetary commitment that the council could not meet on its own, which was why officers were looking at potential support from government sources. He would welcome the opportunity to discuss the matter further outside of the meeting and would ensure that a full response was sent to Mr Bailey.
- 11.4 The mayor thanked Mr Bailey for joining the meeting and speaking on behalf of the deputation. He explained that the matter had been noted and the deputation would be referred to the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee for consideration. The persons forming the deputation would be invited to attend the meeting and would be informed subsequently of any action to be taken or proposed, in relation to the matter set out in the deputation.