



## **DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **PETITION - WESTER INCH SCHOOL BUS TO BATHGATE ACADEMY**

#### **REPORT BY HEAD OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES**

##### **A. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

Then purpose of the report is to consider a petition submitted by residents of Wester Inch requesting the introduction of a school bus between Wester Inch and Bathgate Academy and to provide a recommendation to Council Executive.

##### **B. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Scrutiny Panel;

1. Note the submission of the petition;
2. Note that the Mainstream school budget is fully committed within the current financial year;
3. Note that the existing school transport provision within the Wester Inch area is in line with the Transport to and from Schools Mainstream Policy;
4. Note and consider the following recommendation which is intended to be submitted to the Council Executive for approval:

It is recommended that the Council Executive instruct officers to respond to the petition stating that the request of the petition cannot be met.

##### **C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

<b>I</b>	<b>Council Values</b>	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership
<b>II</b>	<b>Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)</b>	<p>Section 51 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended, requires education authorities to make such arrangements as they consider necessary for the provision of transport to and from school.</p> <p>The council's procedures on dealing with petitions require that petitions are considered by Council Executive.</p>
<b>III</b>	<b>Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers</b>	None
<b>IV</b>	<b>Impact on performance and performance</b>	None

## Indicators

<b>V</b>	<b>Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement</b>	None
<b>VI</b>	<b>Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)</b>	The current approved budget for Mainstream school transport is £3.6 million. The cost of providing extra transport is between £28,500 and £38,000. There is no availability within the mainstream school budget to meet the requests of the petition.
<b>VII</b>	<b>Consideration at PDSP</b>	
<b>VIII</b>	<b>Other consultations</b>	Financial Management Unit

## **D. TERMS OF REPORT**

### **D.1 Background**

A petition signed by 164 residents of Wester Inch has been received by the Council. The petition is requesting the introduction of a school bus to provide transport for pupils in the Wester Inch area to and from Bathgate Academy.

Section 51 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended, requires education authorities to make such arrangements as they consider necessary for the provision of transport to and from school. Section 42 (4) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 sets a statutory walking distance of 2 miles for any pupil under the age of 8, and three miles for any other pupil.

### **D.2 West Lothian Council Policy**

West Lothian Council has a more generous policy which provides free home to school transport for pupils attending their designated catchment school and living 2 or more miles away for secondary pupils and 1.5 or more miles for primary aged pupils.

The distance is measured as the shortest suitable walking distance from home to school using public footpaths between the house gate (or door where this does not apply) and the nearest school gate. The standard criteria for suitable walking routes are that they are of adequate width, have an all-weather surface, and are street lit. Where a suitable walking route is not in existence within the distance parameters of the policy transport will be provided.

Where a pupil does not qualify for free transport to and from school, parents/carers are responsible for travel to and from school.

### **D.3 Wester Inch Transport Eligibility**

The catchment secondary schools for the Wester Inch area are Bathgate Academy and St Kentigern's Academy. All pupils residing in Wester Inch attending St Kentigern's Academy are entitled to school transport as the distance from each address in the area to the school is over 2 miles. School roll data shows there are 30 pupils residing in Wester Inch attending St Kentigern's Academy. The council therefore provides a school service, route SCH 321, that runs between Wester Inch and the school. This is provided solely for those pupils issued with a free school bus pass.

Based on a suitable walking route calculation, the majority of Wester Inch addresses measure under a 2 mile distance from Bathgate Academy and therefore pupils residing in the area are not entitled to free home to school transport. School roll data shows there are 266 pupils residing in Wester Inch attending Bathgate Academy. Appendix 1 provides a map highlighting the 2 mile eligibility border for Wester Inch from the school. The map shows that there are only a small number of pupils attending Bathgate Academy out-with the 2 mile radius (yellow shaded area) who are entitled to free school transport. A minibus is contracted to provide transport for these pupils to and from Bathgate Academy.

Those pupils residing in Wester Inch within the 2 mile radius should use the available suitable walking route to Bathgate Academy. An example of this route is provided within appendix 2.

### **D.4 Public Transport Budget Pressures**

The budget for mainstream school transport provision was originally set at £3,313,497 for financial year 2019/20 however the revenue outturn report was considered by Council Executive on 25 June which highlighted an expected overspend of £400,000. It was agreed that one-off resource of £323,000 would be allocated to assist with the mitigation of the pressure until changes are implemented, however, an underlying pressure still remains.

The additional cost of providing a school bus service from Wester Inch to Bathgate Academy, based on indicative costings, would be between £150 and £200 per day or £28,500 and £38,000 per school year. There is not availability within the current budget to provide additional services over and above current policy.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

A petition has been received from Wester Inch residents requesting the introduction of a school bus route between Wester Inch and Bathgate Academy. The current provision within Wester Inch is in line with the Home to School Transport Policy and there is no available financial resource within the mainstream school budget to provide additional services over and above those already in place.

## **F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES**

None

Appendices/Attachments:

Appendix 1 – 2 mile radius from Bathgate Academy map

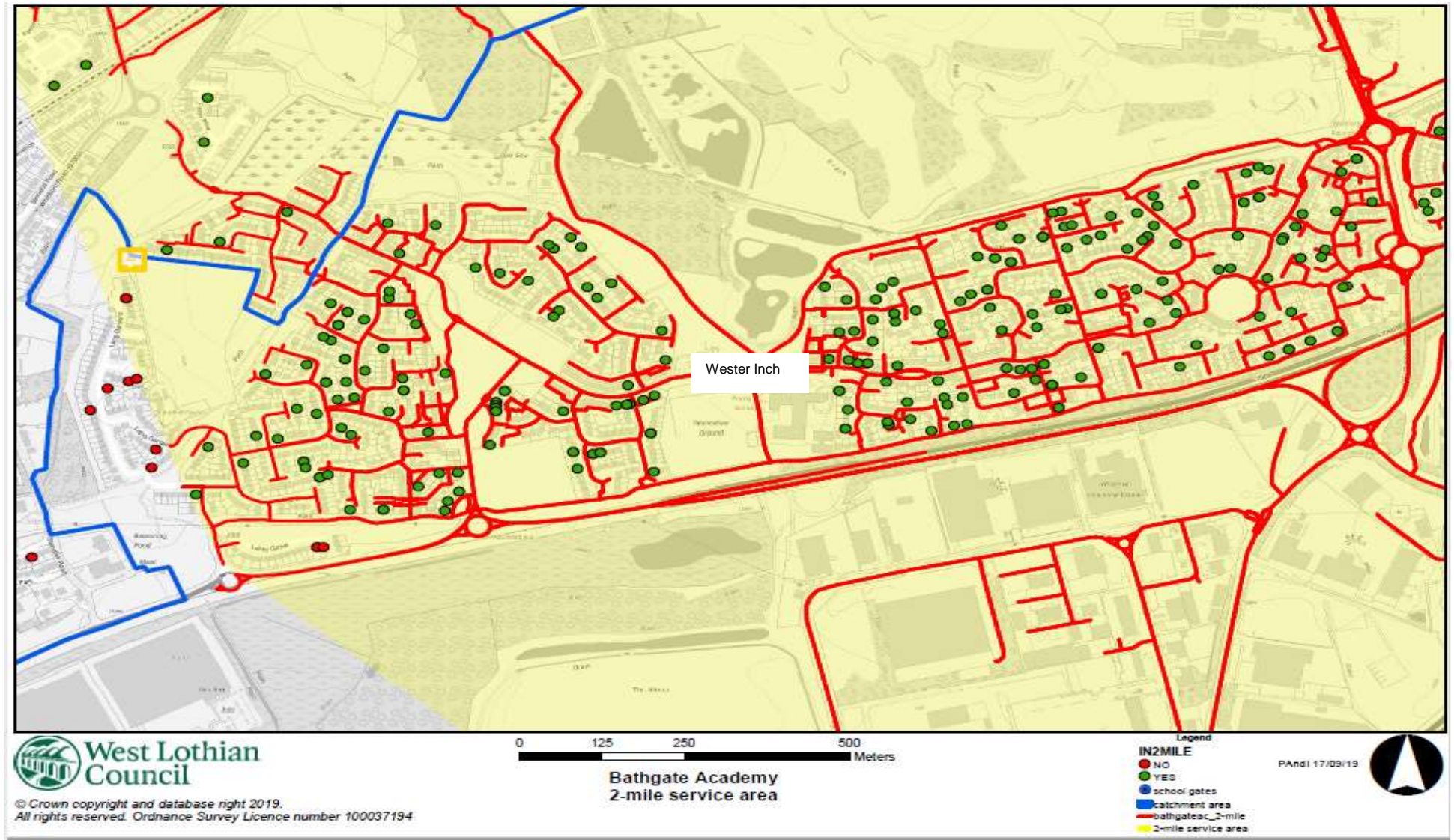
Appendix 2 – Example of Suitable Walking Route Wester Inch to Bathgate Academy

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Date of meeting: 5 November 2019

Appendix 1 – Wester Inch 2 mile radius from Bathgate Academy map





## Appendix 2 – Example of Suitable Walking Route Wester Inch to Bathgate Academy

