



7th January 2014

Dear Mr Baugh

RE: Withdrawal of Free home to School transport

I would like to make our views known on the withdrawal of free home to school transport and ask a number of questions relevant to it, to which I would like a response.

Living in the middle of Colwall we appear to be 4.3 miles from The Chase in Malvern but 5.0 miles from John Masefield High School in Ledbury. However when looking at journey time, it is quicker and easier to get into Ledbury because of the need to go up and down the high Malverns to get over to The Chase

Both our children previously attended the local primary school in the village and now both are high school age they are at John Masefield High School in Ledbury. The school have put a lot of effort in to developing relationships with local primary schools with the aim of getting the confidence of young children, a job I believe they have done well. This now seems to be put at risk when only wealthy parents can afford to send their children there, even though it is our catchment school. Both our children thoroughly enjoy school at John Masefield High school and are doing well there, so we would not wish to move them. However, neither do we wish to have an annual cost of £720 each child to pay for the bus.

The questions I would like to be answered are:-

1. Why when we took the council recommendation to send our children to attend the local catchment school are we now being penalised by being forced to change school or pay a large sum of money to pay for a bus to Ledbury?
2. How are hard working families sending their children to the catchment school supposed to find £720 per child (£1440 per annum in our case but £2160 in some friend's cases) at a time when incomes are static?
3. If this goes forward and you will now be providing a bus to take our children to Malvern, surely you will have to be providing 2 busses instead of 1 from Colwall (as we are close to the mileage split) and so I would like to know how this will save the council money?
4. I understand The Chase is full and so suspect we will not be able to get our child into the school and so the council may well end up having to pay for a bus further afield to Dyson Perrins for example. This is probably further than JMHS and so once again will cost more money – where is the saving in this scenario?

5. Empirical evidence has shown that children forced to move school mid way through their high school often suffer, what counselling and support will the council provide if required?
6. If the Worcestershire schools are full what other options will Herefordshire County Council provide for our Herefordshire children? – and where will the saving be?
7. I believe Herefordshire council developed a great partnership with parents and children through their “yes we can” plan so how does this proposal fit in with these plans that will force them to change school, away from many of their friends, spend much more time travelling to and from school, and be at the mercy of Worcestershire council where we (as a resident of a Herefordshire constituency) have little influence on them?
8. The government’s stated policy is to give parents choice of school wherever possible, and as we have chosen our catchment school, how does this policy stand with the councillors political masters?
9. I simply cannot see how these proposals will save money as at best there will be the same number of busses, but in reality may well result in additional busses being provided so will actually increase costs. How much cost will be saved and how realistic are they?

There is a lot of resistance and anger in the village to these proposals, which are unlikely to give any benefit. I therefore hope the council will see sense and reverse the decision when it is reviewed at the General Overview and Scrutiny Committee next week.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.