

HEREFORDSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY HEADTEACHERS

Weobley High School
Burton Wood
Weobley
HEREFORD
HR4 8ST

8th January 2014

Dear Cllr Seldon,

I am writing as Chair of Herefordshire Association of Secondary Headteachers in which I represent the headteachers and principals of every secondary school and college in the county. At our December meeting, we discussed the transport issue and I have full permission to write on behalf of all members to express our dissatisfaction and disappointment at the decision. Members have been in touch over the past few days and we are aware of questions you will be receiving and fully endorse these as well as posing two of our own.

It is incredible to me that this decision was taken in the face of such opposition, not just from your constituents but from the professionals who lead your schools and educate your children. Indeed, the response to the consultation seems to have had little influence over the outcome. We are fully aware that cost-savings need to be made however we are also the people who will be dealing with the irreversible fallout from this decision and the huge financial and human impact on the education system which will certainly eclipse the 'possible' savings to the transport budget. These savings are now even less significant since certain mitigating factors were introduced as part of the decision.

We now understand that other neighbouring authorities have indeed decided NOT to take this decision having been through the process. This is the opposite of the information we have been furnished with previously and I believe this changes the whole picture and calls into question the validity of the decision and the information provided. Make no mistake; this is significant! The impact of Herefordshire being an anomaly in the region would mean that we could 'leak' children to neighbouring authorities such as Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Shropshire who have decided to continue with designated schools through catchment areas. The argument that we are currently a net importer would not stand as we would struggle to maintain this in the face of an uneven landscape. Neighbouring authorities would continue to offer free transport to their families in the borders to their schools and we would not; not to our own schools anyway. I believe that the only neighbouring authority to have adopted the nearest school model is Powys; as a Welsh authority, this would not affect Herefordshire.

We would like to put two questions to the committee:

1. Do you believe that the diminishing 'possible' savings brought about by the decision warrant the enormous disruption and significant financial and human cost to the education system?

2. In the light of the decision being reached based on inaccurate information provided about the situation in neighbouring authorities and the now potential irreversible impact of being unique in 'burning our bridges', do you agree that this decision should now be reconsidered and possibly reversed?

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,



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