

## Baugh, Ben

---

**From:** [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** 09 January 2014 22:35  
**To:** Baugh, Ben  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Transport Policy questions for Wednesday's meeting (15 January 2014)

**Importance:** High

Dear Mr Baugh

We are delighted to hear that the Scrutiny Committee will be taking a further look at the process followed relating to the Schools Transport Policy.

As parents living in Cradley, we were very disappointed to hear that despite great opposition from parents during the consultation period, the proposal was still voted through. We would like to ask the following questions relating to the process, and the subsequent outcome.

1. Is it fair that our children will not be able to attend their catchment school, unless we are able to pay £720 per child per year? For our two children this amounts to £1440 net, or c.£1900 gross earnings. This takes away our freedom of choice, as to which school to send our children to, and undermines the principle of education for all, i.e. if you have enough money you can educate your children where ever you like.
2. Is it fair that the communities of Cradley and Colwall are being penalised for being in a rural area and close to the Worcestershire Boundary?
3. Is it correct that Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Shropshire have not adopted such an extreme Transport Policy as Herefordshire, and therefore are retaining education funding within their counties? Herefordshire Council states that **only** 800 pupils will be affected by this policy change - if 50% of these 800 pupils choose to obtain free transportation out of county, this equates to approximately £1.6 million of educational funding being sent out of county. How can this be logical in an already financially compromised county? Why would Herefordshire decide to move ahead with an extreme policy that other counties, such as Worcestershire, have decided that they won't implement it because of all the problems and issues that have been outlined during consultation.
4. With the above point in mind, when the decision was made to change the Transport Policy, did the council take into account the impact it would have on other financial budgets i.e. schools funding reducing by £1.6 million within the county? It does not seem logical to us that endeavouring to save £250,000 the county may lose up to £1.6 million in educational funding.
5. Where is the logic in having one catchment for the admissions process into school, and a second 'designated catchment' for Transport to school? We feel this will make the admissions process difficult, possibly lengthy and certainly not as straightforward as it currently is, when you apply for admission and transport to your 'catchment' school.
6. What level of discussions has the council had with their service providers, the bus companies? Surely if the council wishes to save £250,000 of their transport budget, it would be logical to discuss it with the bus companies, as the experts. Has it not been considered that an alternative solution arise from these discussions? Again it seems completely illogical not to consult with key stakeholders, who are directly impacted by this change, such as the bus companies.
7. Is it also correct that no clear cost benefit analysis has been completed prior to this decision being made? What savings are confirmed as being expected? If this is correct it would be absolutely unacceptable in any commercial business environment, and as tax payers and Herefordshire residents we are appalled that decisions have been made with out solid financial analysis. Please would the council inform us in clear terms how much money will be saved by this policy change?
8. Please would the council also confirm that this policy change will not detrimentally affect any other budgets within the county? Please see point 3.
9. If a free bus is to be provided for students travelling from Cradley to Dyson Perrins, and parents wishing to continue their child's education at John Masefield make appropriate payment, how does running two buses save costs, and how does this link to a sustainable transport policy?
10. Have to council taken into consideration the impact on rural villages, and their socio-economic structure? If, for example, the policy is retained there is a strong possibility that young families with children will either move out of Cradley or will not be attracted to Cradley because of the lack of transportation to their catchment school of John Masefield. Cradley village school may not become sustainable and may close. With the


closure of the school and the recent closure of the Post Office, Cradley village does not become an attractive location to live in and thus forces down house prices.

11. If it is anticipated that pupils move out of county, education funding in Herefordshire will fall. Have the council considered the potential for Teacher and Staff redundancies across the county? Have they also considered the real possibility that some schools may become unsustainable and may have to close?
12. We have been very disappointed with the whole consultation process from the beginning of September about this fundamental policy change. Did the process that was followed meet legal or best practice requirements? Key stakeholders (most especially parents from villages affected by the proposal) were not contacted directly by the council advising of this consultation. It has only been through word of mouth that we heard about the chance to participate in the consultation.
13. What was the outcome of the consultation process? We have not received any acknowledgement or feedback from our comments. However, we believe that the overwhelming input during consultation was against this proposal. Can the council please explain why the feedback from their constituents appears to have been completely and totally ignored?
14. We understand that savings need to be made, but can the council confirm that they have considered every possible alternative to meet the cost saving target i.e. have they consulted with the bus companies? Have Head Teachers been consulted for their views and ideas? Have other Transport Policies from around the whole country been scrutinised to gather ideas?

To summarise, it appears to us to be completely illogical for this decision to go ahead without any consideration of the possibly huge financial impact it could have across an already struggling county.

We do hope that the involvement of the Scrutiny Committee has positive results, and look forward to receiving feedback on the next steps in this process.

Regards

  
Cradley residents.