

Baugh, Ben

From: [REDACTED] >
Sent: 10 January 2014 13:37
To: Baugh, Ben
Subject: Changes to Herefordshire Schools Transport Policy

Dear Ben,

Here are the questions I would like to put to the Scrutiny Committee on 15th January 2014, regarding changes to the Herefordshire Schools Transport Policy:-

1. **Where are the proposed cost savings going to come from, bearing in mind that the council will now, in many places be required to provide at least 2 free buses?** For example, from Cradley it will have to provide a bus to JMHS for the yr 10s, Yr 11's and low income students, but it will also have to provide a bus to Dysons for everyone else. Also in the event that Dyson's becomes oversubscribed, Cradley children will not get a place as they are out of county so they may well have to provide an additional bus to the Chase. Colwall will need 2 buses, one to The Chase and one to JMHS. How will this save money? If you are relying on generating income from parents paying for the Guaranteed Seat Scheme you may well have to think again, as most parents are so outraged by this decision they will, on principle, not pay and children will be driven to school which will just clog up HCC's roads causing an increase in road repair costs and a loss of business as people will avoid going into Ledbury because of all the congestion at the crossroads.
2. **Have the proposed new routes actually been looked at in any depth to establish whether they are actually cheaper?** From Cradley to Dysons is about 4 miles via the quickest route, but a bus can't go the quickest route (over the Cowleigh road). The bus would need to go through Leigh Sinton which is a journey of 7 miles from the centre of Cradley (Cradley Surgery). The quickest route to JMHS from Cradley Surgery is 8 miles. Are you really prepared to cause all this disruption to the education for the children of Cradley for the sake of 2 miles a day. In Colwall the distances between Colwall and The Chase, and Colwall and JMHS, is even smaller, especially when you consider the route to the Chase involves negotiating British Camp which will lose any fuel advantage gained from driving 4.8miles to The Chase as opposed to the 5.2 miles to JMHS.
3. **Has any account been taken of the cost of losing all these children from Herefordshire to Worcestershire?** The cost to HCC of losing the quoted 250 children long term far outweighs any financial savings from the amended transport bill. I accept that these are 2 different budgets, but as a tax payer I contribute to both of them and strongly believe they should not be looked at in isolation.
4. By allowing Yr 10's and Yr 11's to stay on the current transport policy HCC has admitted that forcing children to change school midway through their education is detrimental to them. As HCC seems unconcerned about the effect that changing schools will have on the current Yr 7's and Yr 8's, then presumably it has undertaken research which shows that they will not be detrimentally affected. **Please can this research be made public to reassure the parents of HCC that our Yr 7's and Yr 8's will not be affected in the way that KS4 students will obviously be? This research has actually been done hasn't it?**
5. **Why did HCC claim that this policy is currently in place in Worcestershire when it isn't?** WCC do not force their Pre 16's to go to school out of county. They bus them to the nearest school within the county. They did indeed look at the model that HCC is proposing and decided that financially (and most probably ethically) it did not stack up. Presumably they factored in the lost income from sending children to be educated elsewhere. **So, did HCC make this incorrect claim in an attempt to mislead people, or did it make it because it hadn't done enough research?**
6. **Parents of current Yr 6 children were not told of this change before applying to their catchment school. Why was this? Is it acceptable that an important criteria for the decision about secondary schools is removed without any warning, and after it is too late to change secondary choices?**

7. The nearest school to Cradley is Dysons. This is a C of E School. This means that those people who are not C of E are less likely to get in. **How is a policy which discriminizes people on the basis of any faith except C of E a good option for Herefordshire, which already has extremely low levels of ethnicity?**
8. **How is the admissions process for the children of Cradley going to be handled in the future, when the Malvern schools are up to full capacity as is predicted in the next 2 or 3 years?** We are not even in the catchment area for the school to which we will be eligible to free transport. In 2 or 3 years, our only choice would be to apply to Dysons knowing that we probably wouldn't get in, then we wouldn't get into the Chase as we would have to put that as 2nd choice and they will also be oversubscribed. The next obvious choice would be JMHS, but at 3rd choice again we probably wouldn't get in, which would mean our children would be at the mercy of the council and would be sent to whatever school did have spaces, which could be anywhere – and HCC would have to pay for them to get there. This could mean numerous buses from Cradley and our children being spewed to the 4 corners of either Herefordshire or Worcester. **How is this a cheaper scenario when all we want is 1 bus to 1 school (JMHS)?**
9. **Were any other options looked at?** The consultation process threw up a number of other options. Were these discussed in detail and were stakeholders allowed to give an opinion. If so, can these discussions be made public. I am sure the majority of parents would be willing to pay a small amount for the bus (not the current £720), or perhaps the bus companies would be prepared to renegotiate their contracts. Have they even been asked?
10. **Is the council wise to ignore the advice of so many of the Counties Headteachers?** Headteacher's are professional people who are in the best place to see the devastating impact that this policy will have on Herefordshire's Secondary and Primary schools and its Communities. **Why are their concerns being ignored?** Surely they are the very people to whom HCC should be turning to for advice, in order to find a more workable solution.
11. **How will this policy affect Herefordshire's schools in terms of results?** Many of the affected children go to some of the counties highest achieving schools (e.g. Cradley and Colwall). Sending children who are potential high achievers to out of county schools will have a negative impact on the counties results and this impact will spiral over the years, i.e. schools with low results only attract low achieving pupils.
12. **What will HCC do if this new policy does not achieve the savings it hoped?** If this new model is brought in and doesn't make the required savings it will need to be changed again. Even HCC have admitted that the numbers are not very clear, and a saving of £250k is so small that it only takes one variable to be wrong in order for the savings to actually become a loss. This would either mean that HCC would need to change the policy again, or would have to continue indefinitely in a policy which is costing more than anticipated. If the council is desperate to save money, then the latter choice of continuing with the policy is obviously not an option, so the only choice the council would have would be to change the policy. This would mean that all the children who changed schools due to this change would then need to change schools again. This would have a devastating effect on Herefordshire children, Herefordshire schools and Herefordshire Communities and is completely unacceptable.

Best wishes

