

Committee: **Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness**
 Date: **21 January 2013**
 Title of Report: **Home to School Transport: Provision for children living in shared community areas in East Sussex**
 By: **Director of Children’s Services**
 Purpose of Report: **To consider the application of the County Council’s transport policy to children who live in joint rural community areas which were previously exempt.**

Recommendation:

The Lead Member is recommended:

- 1. to not make a change to the application of the County Council’s transport policy to joint community areas during 2013/14; and**
- 2. to agree that this decision is reviewed in 2014/15 following further consultation (which will now include the Eastbourne joint area) and more detailed calculations of projected savings based on preferences and on potential savings from the Eastbourne joint area. The outcome of this work should be reported to Lead Member in January 2014 for decision.**

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 The Home to School Transport Budget for 2012/13 is £9.895m

1.2 If changes were made to the way the County Council’s transport policy to joint community areas was applied, the medium term financial plan for 2013/16 **estimated** the following savings:

2013/14	£10,000
2014/15	£17,000
2015/16	£17,000
Total	£44,000

1.3 Further work to determine actual savings will need to be carried out based on preferences.

2. Background

2.1 As part of the County Council’s financial planning, an undertaking was made to review discretionary areas of expenditure where transport has been provided for some families although there is no entitlement either under current legislation or the County Council’s home to school transport policy. This review produced a proposal to consider the application of the County Council’s transport policy to children living in joint rural community areas. A consultation plan was drawn up, information about the proposal was sent to all primary and secondary schools in East Sussex, and was also placed on the County Council’s website. Comments were welcomed from parents of pupils of all ages, regardless of where they lived, but particularly from parents with children in Year 6.

2.2 The Home to School Transport Policy does not give an entitlement for transport to all schools serving a joint rural community area. However, historically children have been given support with home to school transport to any school serving their joint rural community area provided the eligibility criteria are met. However, if parents opt to apply for a more distant school, regardless of the fact that it served the child’s community area, under the established policy, transport should not be paid to that school.

3. Supporting Information

3.1 **Appendix 1** explains what are ‘community areas’ and ‘joint areas’ and shows the joint rural community areas in detail.

3.2 The County Council’s policy regarding transport for pupils living in joint areas is shown as **Appendix 2**.

3.3 The County Council has a legal obligation to provide home to school transport for eligible

pupils. The criteria for eligibility are enshrined in legislation and the County Council's transport policy is fully compliant.

3.4 The Lead Member is also advised that in addition to the rural joint community areas, there is one joint area in Eastbourne which served by Willingdon Community School, The Causeway School, and Bexhill High School. As this community area was subject to an Adjudicator's decision in 2008 which only took effect from September 2010, a review has been delayed so that discussions can take place with the school before a separate consultation exercise could be undertaken on reviewing provision from the 2014/15 school year. The timing of this is intended to coincide with parents' secondary transfer applications.

4. Stakeholder Consultations already undertaken

4.1 The consultation on applying the transport policy to these previously exempt areas was undertaken between 17 September 2012 and 31 October 2012 so that parents, especially those with children in Year 6 were aware of the proposal before they submitted their secondary school applications.

4.2 The outcome of the consultation including comments and additional correspondence received is set out in **Appendix 3** and shows that the vast majority of respondents are not in favour of applying the transport policy to these discretionary areas.

5 Risks or PR Issues

5.1 The ongoing risk for 2013/14 is that the current Home to School Transport policy is not being applied correctly but the risk of challenge in this respect is minimal.

6 Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations

6.1 Although some savings could be made if a change to the way the agreed policy was applied from 2013, given the concern expressed in the consultation and the relatively small estimated savings earmarked for 2013/14 (£10,000) the Lead Member is not recommended to agree a change to the application of the policy at this time.

6.2 However, the County Council's financial position and savings proposals will need to be kept under review in 2014/15. It is therefore recommended that this decision is reviewed in 2014/15 following further consultation (which will now include the Eastbourne joint area) and more detailed calculations of projected savings based on preferences and on potential savings from the Eastbourne joint area. The outcome of this work should be reported to Lead Member in January 2014 for decision.

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Local Member(s): All

Background Documents: None

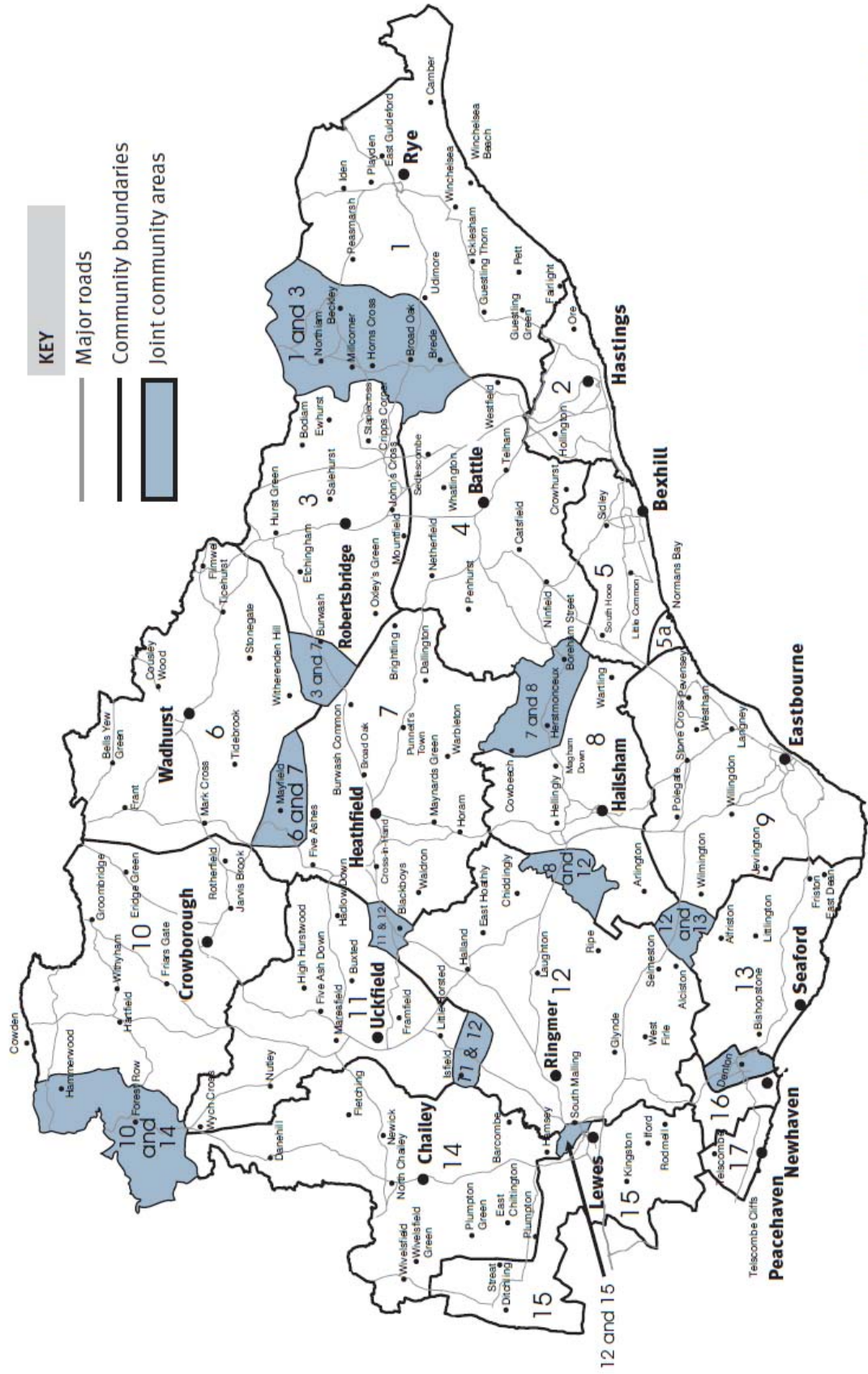
Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Map of East Sussex showing secondary school community areas emphasising joint community areas.

Appendix 2 - East Sussex Transport Policy for joint community areas;

Appendix 3 – Comments and correspondence received during the consultation.

Community areas are areas that are served by a particular secondary school or schools, and children within each area have priority for admission to the specific school(s) over those who do not. Joint areas are served by more than one secondary school and this Appendix shows the joint rural community areas in detail.





East Sussex policy regarding home to school transport for children living in joint community areas

*'We will provide free transport between home and school if your child is eight years of age or over and lives more than three miles (4828 metres) from the **designated*** school,.....'*

****The designated school is the school suitable to your child's age which serves your area, or if there is more than one school, the nearest school to your home which is suitable for your child and at which a place is available.'***

Appendix 3

Help with home to school transport - have your say

Our proposal is to ensure that from September 2013 free home to school transport for children living in rural joint community areas is only provided to the nearest designated school (which must be over three miles away). Families with low incomes (i.e. who qualify for free school meals) are assessed differently for help with transport and arrangements are unchanged for these families.

We would like to hear your views on this proposal as well as the impact it might have on you.

Q1 Do you agree with the proposal to only provide free home to school transport for children living in joint rural community areas to the nearest designated school (which must be over three miles away) as stated in the published transport policy?

1 (1%)	Strongly agree
1 (1%)	Agree
0 (0%)	Neither agree nor disagree
6 (8%)	Disagree
71 (89%)	Strongly disagree
0 (0%)	Don't know

Q2 If you wish, please give your main reasons for your answer to Q1 above.

68 (85%)

Q3 What impact would the proposal have on you?

75 (94%)

Q4 Are you a...?

41 (51%)	Parent/carer or a pupil living in East Sussex receiving free home to school transport
32 (40%)	Parent/carer or a pupil living in East Sussex not receiving free home to school transport
11 (14%)	A member of staff or governor of an East Sussex School
9 (11%)	Other
If other, please specify	9 (100%)

About you...

We want to make sure that everyone is treated fairly and equally and that no one gets left out. That's why we ask you these questions.

We won't share the information you give us with anyone else. We will only use it to help us make decisions and make our services better.

If you would rather not answer any of these questions, you don't have to.

Q5 Are you.....? Please select one answer

15 (19%)	Male
60 (75%)	Female
3 (4%)	Prefer not to say

Q6 Do you identify as a transgender or trans person? Please select one answer

0 (0%)	Yes
64 (80%)	No
5 (6%)	Prefer not to say

Q7 Which of these age groups do you belong to? Please select one answer

- 1 (1%) under 18
- 0 (0%) 18-24
- 8 (10%) 25-34
- 42 (53%) 35-44
- 23 (29%) 45-54
- 1 (1%) 55-59
- 0 (0%) 60-64
- 0 (0%) 65-74
- 0 (0%) 75+
- 3 (4%) Prefer not to say

Q8 What is your postcode? 75 (94%)

Q9 To which of these ethnic groups do you feel you belong? (source: 2011 census)

Please select one answer

- 68 (85%) White British
- 0 (0%) White Irish
- 0 (0%) White Gypsy/Roma
- 0 (0%) White Irish Traveller
- 1 (1%) White other*
- 0 (0%) Mixed White and Black Caribbean
- 0 (0%) Mixed White and Black African
- 1 (1%) Mixed White and Asian
- 0 (0%) Mixed other*
- 0 (0%) Asian or Asian British Indian
- 0 (0%) Asian or Asian British Pakistani
- 0 (0%) Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi
- 0 (0%) Asian other*
- 0 (0%) Black or Black British Caribbean
- 0 (0%) Black or Black British African
- 0 (0%) Black other*
- 0 (0%) Arab
- 0 (0%) Chinese
- 6 (8%) Prefer not to say
- 1 (1%) Other ethnic group*
- *If your ethnic group was not specified in the list please describe your ethnic group. 2 (100%)

The Equality Act 2010 describes a person disabled if they have a longstanding physical or mental condition that has lasted or is likely to last at least 12 months; and this condition has a substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. People with some conditions (cancer, multiple sclerosis and HIV/AIDS, for example) are considered to be disabled from the point that they are diagnosed.

Q10 Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010?

Please select one answer

- 0 (0%) Yes
- 71 (89%) No
- 6 (8%) Prefer not to say

Q10a If you answered yes to Q10, please tell us the type of impairment that applies to you.

You may have more than one type of impairment, so please select all that apply. If none of these apply to you please select other and write in the type of impairment you have.

- 0 (0%) Physical impairment

- 0 (0%) Sensory impairment (hearing and sight)
- 0 (0%) Long standing illness or health condition, such as cancer, HIV, heart disease, diabetes or epilepsy
- 0 (0%) Mental health condition
- 0 (0%) Learning disability
- 0 (0%) Prefer not to say
- 0 (0%) Other*
- *If other, please specify 0 (0%)

Q11 Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion or belief?

Please select one answer

- 17 (21%) Yes
- 50 (63%) No
- 10 (13%) Prefer not to say

Q11a If you answered yes to Q11, which one?

Please select one answer

- 17 Christian (100%)
- 0 (0%) Buddhist
- 0 (0%) Hindu
- 0 (0%) Jewish
- 0 (0%) Muslim
- 0 (0%) Sikh
- 0 (0%) Any other religion
- If other please specify 0 (0%)

Q12 Are you... Please select one answer

- 1 (1%) Bi/Bisexual
- 58 (73%) Heterosexual/Straight
- 0 (0%) Gay woman/Lesbian
- 0 (0%) Gay Man
- 0 (0%) Other
- 16 (20%) Prefer not to say

Comments following Shared Area Transport Consultation

Case 1
Question 2 This proposal will have a negative impact on the environment in this area as many people will be forced to drive their children to their chosen school - this proposal limits choice - affecting less well off and "squeezed middle" families, wealthy people in this area send their children to the many independent schools who provide transport.
Question 3 I have 4 children, the eldest will start secondary school in 2013. We had already looked at Rye College and Robertsbridge College and although both schools are impressive it was very obvious that Robertsbridge will be much more suitable for my children who are very good at maths. I will end up spending around £60 per week on School Transport, forcing me to drive them to school. we will have to stop their music lessons and school lunches. We felt we could not go back on our decision after hearing about this proposal because Rye College specialises in the Arts, not an area of interest for my eldest two children who will benefit from attending Robertsbridge Community College as they are very interested and even gifted at Maths. We are very upset at this proposal as it will have a huge impact on our already tight budget, eventually I would have to transport the children myself, delaying my planned return to full-time work. Also, I find this idea upsetting as we have always walked to primary school to lessen harm to the environment and congestion on the roads, surely transporting children by bus is far better for the environment? Would it be possible to pay only the difference in cost when the further school is chosen?
Case 2
Question 2 Having one child already at a school with free transport makes practical sense for our second child to go to the same school. This makes it very unfair to remove the free bus. It will push more cars on to the road if people decide to drive. There are 700 new homes going into Hailsham which already means more children for the Secondary School so any rural children would then have to go to a second choice (or their first choice). How come it's always people who earn 1000's who make these decisions for those who are not so well off.
Question 3 As a low income family (but not low enough for free school meals) it would have a huge impact on our house-hold budget to pay over £400 for the bus. We already have no annual holiday so this would cut into other essentials.
Case 3
Question 2 You are effectively taking away the right from those lower income families to choose between schools. I am a single parent who has a thirteen year old who receives free transport as her school is more than 3 miles away. My nine year old will move to secondary in two years time and I would like him to attend the same school as my daughter (within our designated area). There is a school nearer but it has an awful reputation. Although I am a single parent, I AM a respectful working one and own my home. I earn £10,000 a year, receive no financial support from my ex-husband and every single penny counts. BUT, and this is an enormous but, my children are so well supported from home, are doing tremendously well at school, are in top sets, top groups, both working well above the national average, and to have the right to continue with the best education possible to my son whipped away from him is heartbreaking to me. I am well aware that should I not work and be lazy I would receive everything free of charge and having some self-respect is my downfall. That is a bigger societal issue that needs addressing but in the meantime maybe you should consider whether it is fair to parents who already have an older sibling in the school? Many families move to the village where I live because of the good schools, it is certainly why I chose to live here and this new policy you are suggesting will have an adverse effect in many ways.
Question 3 Answered in Q2 above. Ultimately it will effect my son's education as he will probably have to attend a school with a poor reputation while my daughter attends a different and much nicer school. My son will not have as good an education as my daughter. Having children in different schools makes life complicated too!

Case 4
Question 2 We live in a village with local schools which we do not want our children to attend. We also have a school which we do support and our children attend on a school bus. This school has served our village for decades. Under your proposals my youngest child will not be able to attend the same school as her 3 siblings.
Question 3 Sending our child to a school we would not be happy with.
Case 5
Question 2 The nearest school may be a school with problems, and rubbish results. It is not fair that you can only access "rubbish" education. We pay our taxes and should have the right to good education, not closest education only.
Question 3 I am currently having to pay £400 a year to send my child to a decent school, in 2 years time it will cost me £800 a year for the 2nd child as well.
Case 6
Question 2 No comments given
Question 3 It would mean my child would not be able to go to a "good" ofsted school but have to go to a lower graded one as that is the closest. As a single parent the additional bus fares are not an option for me
Case 7
Question 2 We have a choice of 2 schools in our area both of which provide free transport, I did not choose the school over what transport but over its academic record. My nearest school would certainly not be suitable academically for my son in y5 or my daughter in y8.
Question 3 My children would be going to completely different secondary schools and would receive completely different education. I would not be able to afford to pay for transport to the school I would prefer my son to attend and my nearest school is not one I would want to send him to.
Case 8
Question 2 No comments given
Question 3 A moral impact; I believe that public transport costs are too high.
Case 9
Question 2 These changes are highly unfair, and are restricting the choice of secondary schools for children, as parents who currently do not receive benefits etc., may not be able to afford the cost of transport.
Question 3 In the short term these changes won't affect me as my child is still of primary school age, however, in the long term they will as it is highly likely that our school of preference will not be Rye College which will be the only school which will have free transport provided for the area which we live (Peasmarsh)
Case 10
Question 2 This will inevitably mean that parents will be forced to make a choice based on free transport, rather than the most appropriate/suitable school for their child. It will particularly impact on parents with more than one child and on lower income families. By the very nature of where we live, parents in rural communities often have difficulties with transport anyway and this policy seems to penalise rural families for inadvertently choosing to live 'between' two schools. Surely ESCC should be showing a

commitment to parental choice, as well as reducing the local carbon footprint. This proposal will inevitably impact on the latter as parents will be forced to transport their children themselves if their preferred school is not the nearest one, leading to more cars on the road and huge difficulties for working parents.

Question 3
 At present I have one daughter attending Ringmer CC. I live in Upper Dicker, so her nearest school is Hailsham CC. A very high percentage of pupils from her year group chose Ringmer over Hailsham, but if I had not qualified for a free bus service, I would struggle to pay for transport. She is excelling at Ringmer, as did her elder sister, so this is obviously the right school for her. I assume the proposals won't affect me unless I move house, but they will affect families in my village and I feel very strongly about this.

Case 11

Question 2
 It Means that parents will have to transopr. this create stress, pollution & more traffic on the roads. more chance of road accidents.

Question 3
 Personaly none. as we do not meet the 3 mile rule but my son has to take two buses each way. this creatrs a long day for him

Case 12

Question 2
 No comments given

Question 3
 Reduces choice of school

Case 13

Question 2
 All of the children attending State Schools in our village (Upper Dicker) attend Ringmer Community College, NONE attend Hailsham Community College. The new proposals will fail to serve Upper Dicker in entirety as you propose to only provide a service to the closest school which is Hailsham. This is NOT the school of choice for the residents of Upper Dicker.

Question 3
 We have 2 children who would need to be at separate at the same time for drop off and pick up. This is not logistically possible with the cancellation of the bus service as proposed.

Case 14

Question 2
 We wish for our daughters to attend Ringer Community College. Under the current proposals the bus to Ringmer will be cancelled for all children in our village in the medium term(post 2013). Please note that relevant age group defined children in this village attend Ringmer, not Hailsham. I see no reason for this trend to change in the medium term. Additional cars driving to and from Ringmer every day would add further congestion to the already challenged transport network and potentially a health and safety issue to the children arriving and leaving school with an increased density of local traffic. The lack of a continued bus service to Ringmer would disadvantage our village(Upper Dicker) compared to other villages within catchment of Ringmer Community College.

Question 3
 We would be very difficult to manage taking and collecting our children to different schools at the same time. An alternative school choice within the catchment area is not considered a viable option.

Case 15

Question 2
 I live in community area of Burwash serving Robersbridge College and Heathfield College, and have chosen the best school that suits my child out of the two, being Heathfield Community College as it specialises in Drama and Music that my son wishes to pursue, and the above proposal could affect us, but purely on what route is used. We are 5.7 miles from Heathfield CC and currently qualify for free transport, but for Robertsbridge one route, nearest to our house, takes 6.0 miles, in which case we qualify, another is 7.4 miles and again we would qualify, but the third route is 5 miles and we would

not qualify. So which route would they use to make their decision? I am now a single parent (recently separated, divorced by Sept 2013 and on low income, but not low enough as I work part time and could get penalised for working too much!
Question 3 It could mean having to pay for transport whilst on a low income
Case 16
Question 2 With the current trend of school partnerships being offered by the Community Colleges to the area primary schools it establishes strong links between schools from an early age. The primary school children often attend events at the secondary schools but then find themselves 'out of the catchment area' when it comes to the transition.
Question 3 I currently pay over £25 per week to send my 2 elder children to secondary school; when my third child hopefully joins next year this will rise to a minimum of £38 per week. And yet most of the partnerships activities are with the secondary school supposedly out of our area when it comes to funding. The bus would continue to travel the same route regardless of the funding; with the majority of children travelling for free. As the cost will be excessive I will end up having to change my current employment so that I can drive them to work. This will obviously add to the congestion at the secondary school and be to the detriment of the environment. I don't mind making a contribution but find the fares excessive with three children.
Case 17
Question 2 At the moment the pupils at my school have a choice between RCC and HCC. Although I believe RCC is slightly closer(Though HCC is an easier and more obvious route) the majority of children do choose HCC and we have very close links with the CC. We are part of the Heathfield Area Schools Partnership which affords the children many opportunities in preparation for their move to the secondary sector. In days of parental choice and when there is so little difference in distance it would seem very unfair for parents to be penalised financially for choosing one school over another.
Question 3 May result in only the better off families getting a choice of school. I realise those on exceptionally low incomes will get help, but there are often many families just above the threshold who do not qualify for any help at all.
Case 18
Question 2 This does affect people's choice. Families might choose a school based on the affordability not because they think it is the right school for their child, even though these families live in catchment for both schools. Also, I strongly object to the timing of the consultation. Feedback is encouraged until 31 October. Therefore, no definitive decision will have been made by then. Yet, families have to choose a school no later than 31 October. The outcome of this consultation could have fundamental affects on the decisions families might have made.
Question 3 In order to choose the school that I feel is right for my child (the emphasis on subjects, their SEN department, the transition from my child's primary school), I could now be liable to hundreds of pounds of travel fees, even though I live in the catchment area for that school!!
Case 19
Question 2 No comments given
Question 3 No comments given
Case 20
Question 2 My son is in year 9 of school, my daughter will go up 2014 and I would like her to go to the same school, we cannot afford to send even 1 of them if we pay for transport. My son has aspergers, he

would not take to another school but we would have to "pull" him. Also the designated school is small, already full so how would they accommodate more kids.

Question 3

we would have to consider home education or send the kids to a school we do not like

Case 21

Question 2

My youngest son attends Heathfield so purely for convenience we would like his 3 other siblings to do the same, it makes no sense at all to split them up. More importantly my wife will be the main point of contact and would be unable to get to Robertsbridge (she cant drive and no public transport is available) should any of my children need to come home. For the above reasons we have no choice but to stick with Heathfield and would therefore be saddled with a very large transport bill should the proposal go through (as we have 4 children!!!) I chose Heathfield on the basis of its performance whilst also asking my child which school he preferred, this decision may have been different had I known of the potential charges associated with transport. It is not fair to apply this charge to siblings.

Question 3

As stated above we have to stick with Heathfield as one of my children is already attending there, I find it hard just to sort transport for him with after school clubs etc (as my wife doesn't drive) so with the other 3 doing the same but at another school it would be virtually impossible. This would have a massive financial impact on me as at any one time I would have a minimum of two kids at the school at the same time (£1400 per year) and for 2 years I will have three (£2100 per year). We have only one income coming in to the house and that isn't not a massive one so £2100.00 would be crippling. We feel cheated at Burwash as we don't have anywhere near the same facilities as other areas (other areas have better recycling, fully paid for playgrounds - we have to part fund our own just because of its location, streetlights etc. but we still pay the same tax; this is just the icing on the sour tasting cake.

Case 22

Question 2

You are taking the choice of schools away from us we regularly shop and the children take part in activity's in Heathfield we feel a close link with the community of Heathfield but we never visit Robertsbridge and yet you would choose that school for us because geographically its slightly closer than Heathfield via a small county lane that we would never choose to drive down, if you were to map out the route on the main roads, Heathfield would indeed be closer.

Question 3

One of the main reasons of moving to Burwash was the choice of Heathfield as a secondary school, this choice would not be an option should you only provide transport to Robertsbridge, my son will be leaving Burwash primary next year and was looking forward to starting secondary school with his friends, he has emotional / learning issues and would find starting a new school without the support of people around him he knew a very daunting prospect.

Case 23

Question 2

No comments given

Question 3

No comments given

Case 24

Question 2

It would false parents if they were unable to pay for school transport costs,to choose a school, for the wrong reasons.

Question 3

Financially unable to pay transport costs.

Case 25

Question 2

I believe there should be some element of choice in choosing a secondary school...especially when one lives in a rural area where one is almost exactly in between two schools (a joint area) where transport would always be necessary either way, but should not, in my opinion, be the deciding factor.

As a County Council you currently support a child's transport costs in these joint areas which ever school is chosen....With the proposal in mind you would still do so, but would be enforcing which school is chosen through transport eligibility....Overall which ever scheme is being run the cost to you would be similar and I think then that choice in their child's education, within reason, should be given to parents. Choice should not be limited by ability to pay. Your proposal encourages a system of choice in these areas only for those who can afford the annual bill, which I understand to be around £700 annually

Question 3
I'm not sure and have made a phone call to you today to try and facilitate some answers (Held for 15mins until decided to take the option for someone to call me back...looking forward to the call)...I live in Burwash Weald and cannot tell from the map you sent whether we live in a joint area or not. Again from your map it looks like our designated school would be HCC rather than RCC which we are considering, but would like this confirmed and the fact that we are the required 3 miles away.

Case 26

Question 2
Being between two secondary schools, transport would only be provided to the school which most children don't move to (although it is slightly nearer). Not only is this unfair and financially unviable for most of the parents (myself included), it means that my children will not be able to choose the school that is best suited to them and their future educational needs. The proposal is unfair and will create chaos when applying for secondary schools in future years.

Question 3
Financial - costs are extortionate and decisions will have to be based due to financial restraints rather than the reasons schools should be chosen (educational, social, etc)

Case 27

Question 2
Children within the rural community should have the choice - the nearest school may not have the specialist teaching that your child wants i.e. computing or arts

Question 3
With the cost of transporting a child to and from school. Larger amount of cars on the road - more pollution, more traffic

Case 28

Question 2
No comments given

Question 3
It would limit the choice of secondary school for my children

Case 29

Question 2
Children that live in a community area with a choice of two schools should have the right to attend either without transport costs being an issue. In our case, living in Herstmonceux we have a choice of Hailsham or Heathfield. We have always planned to send our children to Heathfield because of the secondary schools involvement with Herstmonceux school and it is also the most suitable for our children. We now have to take into consideration the transport costs which means it could affect our decision and our child's education, is this right? Shouldn't a child's education be priority and not the cost of getting them there!

Question 3
This proposal with a an huge impact on our decision of which school to send our children to which is not right. If we live in two community areas we should have the right to send our children to either school with cost not being the issue.

Case 30

Question 2
you should have a chose of schools within a 10 mile area

Question 3
two of my children will be a Heathfield the other at Robertsbridge

Case 31
Question 2 I have 3 children and could not afford the transport for all 3 to go to the school of my choice
Question 3 I would have to send my children to the school closest and to the one of my choice

Case 32
Question 2 My Family cannot afford to pay for any transport to school as it is, when my sister and brother need to go to secondary school it would be unfair for them to go to a different school to me just so they get the free transport.
Question 3 My sister and brother would go to a different school or We would have to pay for transport to get them to my school, and we cannot afford that.

Case 33
Question 2 This will highlight a difference in income as to some £700 a year is not a lot but to people on low income, especially with more than one child, they may not be able to go to their preferred school. They are going to have to catch a bus anyway, so it won't cost the council any more...
Question 3 It would cost me over £2000 for travel for my 3 children to my preferred secondary school. Most children from Burwash go to Heathfield, but we are at the far end of Burwash and would now come under Roberstbridge. I could not afford the £2000 bus fares so they would not go to secondary school with their friends.

Case 34
Question 2 Choice of school shoould not be a privilege just for those who can afford transport. Children may have siblings at a school and wish to join them.
Question 3 ly would mean my son would have no choice of school unless i could pay for transport, also it would mean he would not be able to attend a grammar of sports college if it were appropriate for him

Case 35
Question 2 No comments given
Question 3 It would mean no transport for my child to my preferred school and mean transport would only be available to a school that only goes up to year 11 (Robertsbridge) rather than year 13 (Heathfield)

Case 36
Question 2 All children should have the right of choice of schooling.
Question 3 We would only have the choice of 1 school in Hailsham. It wouldn't even allow use to choose which school in Hailsham they went to.

Case 37
Question 2 I strongly disagree with the proposals, I have two children & live in the village of Burwash. If these proposals are brought in it would mean my children would not have the choice of Heathfield community college they would have to go to Robertsbridge and to be quite frank i don't want them to go there, There father went to Heathfield & many of their relatives. I don't think it is fair to force a choice by affordability, There should be at least two options as there currently is don't change what isn't broken.
Question 3

Financially it would leave us with no option but to send our children to a school we do not want too, its insulting as a taxpayer & average hard working family that we wont have the option.

Case 38

Question 2
This can unfairly influence what school a child is sent to because the parent has no other means of getting the child safely to the school they want their child to attend.

Question 3
As a working parent it would have a huge impact on my working day as I don't want my child to attend the closest school, I want my child to attend the school that I believe is right for them.

Case 39

Question 2
children should not be discriminated against if the school that is best suited to them is slightly further away than an alternative

Question 3
financial burdon increases as i would not change schools and this would also impact on siblings

Case 40

Question 2
I agree that there is little sense in transporting children almost 10 miles to school on a daily basis when there is a closer school, but I disagree with the manner in which it is to be introduced. I think siblings of current students should be eligible for free transport, provided they start before their older sibling leaves the school. I am concerned that bus services may be axed in the future if not enough students are using them due to reductions on parents choosing the school based on transport costs. This would leave me having to get my eldest child to college at the same time as my youngest to primary, 7 miles apart.

Question 3
Very little unless the school bus from my area is axed

Case 41

Question 2
Why should we be forced to go to a poor under performing school in Rye when the majority of the children from Beckley in fact go to Robertsbridge.

Question 3
This change would potentially prevent my wife from working because of the necessary logistics.

Case 42

Question 2
No comments given

Question 3
Hugh fuel costs and also not being able to drop secondary children off on time as having to be at younger siblings primary school

Case 43

Question 2
This will essentially mean there is no choice in secondary school for the children affected. It does not make sense as a money saving scheme as people will still have to use the bus if they are forced to attend the second school through financial constraints. The bus is running any way so it is a money raising scheme rather than saving which is morally flawed.

Question 3
It will mean that the family budget will be greatly reduced as I have three children who will be at school at the same time. It will mean my children attending different schools. One will have free transport the others wouldn't. It ghettoises children and would mean them attending a less suitable school.

Case 44

Question 2
because certain children might not be suited to there nearest school and so need to travel to the next

school.
Question 3 No comments given

Case 45
Question 2 We live in Forest Row and the school has close links with other East Sussex schools, particularly Chailey. At present, many children choose to go to Sackville in West Sussex because it is nearer, BUT children who would benefit from a smaller school go to Chailey, even though Beacon may be a closer East Sussex school. I work at Forest Row Primary school and have seen many children benefit from the links we have with Chailey (we are in the Chailey cluster). Most children would not consider Chailey if there were no free bus service there.
Question 3 At present, none, as my elder son is at Sackville and my younger son has just chosen to go there. Sackville is our closest school and it is more than 4 miles from our house. However, if Sackville doesn't work well for my younger son, who is quite quiet, I would consider trying to move him to Chailey if there were a free bus service.

Case 46
Question 2 Because my older son attends Uplands, and currently receives free transport. I wish my younger son to attend the same school and I have already completed my online application requesting Uplands as 1st choice. There is a difference of less than 1 mile between the 2 schools.
Question 3 This would cost me £689 per year, which I can not afford. I work so I am unable to drive my children to school. I do not want 2 children at 2 different schools, feel its wrong to change the rules in this way, or at lease allow siblings to still get transport.

Case 47
Question 2 My child attends Robertsbridge Community College which is further away than Rye Community College. There are many reasons why Robertsbridge is a more appropriate school for my child which is why we chose it.
Question 3 A huge impact financially. I cannot afford the transport costs to Robertsbridge and my second child wishes to attend Robertsbridge in 2014. Having to find transport costs for both children is going to be extremely difficult. If, for the sake of transport costs, I had to take my daughter out of Robertsbridge to attend Rye, it would cause her a great deal of emotional distress. She is already shy and lacks self-confidence so this would be very detrimental to her happiness and her learning.

Case 48
Question 2 I am a single parent on working tax credits. I do not qualify for free school meals. I could not possibly afford to pay for my second child to attend Heathfield CC where her brother goes and has thrived. I would not want her to go to Hailsham CC but naturally follow where her elder sibling has gone. Heathfield CC has been a main feeder school from Herstmonceux for many years and links closely with the primary school for events and transition. Being forced away as a parent from the college due this scheme would be outrageously unfair.
Question 3 Forcing a secondary school choice based on free transport is ridiculously unfair. Heathfield CC has been a main feeder from Herstmonceux for many many years and has a fantastic link to the primary school for events and transition. I would be forced to send my child to a college that does not best suit her needs. The pupil's needs should continue to be met as a priority, this scheme will strip the purpose of the strong links between colleges and rural schools. Choice is surely a right for families. Cuts forcing a one school option is ridiculous.

Case 49
Question 2 This proposal is grossly unfair - our preferred option for our son's secondary school will not be the nearest to our address in Beckley. This decision is based on many factors, one of which was the availability of a free bus. Getting the best education possible for our children should be a basic human right, and governments, both national and local, should do everything in their power to encourage this rather than discourage it through pointless budget cuts.
Question 3 Increased costs to send our son to the best school for him.
Case 50
Question 2 i would not be able to afford to send my child on the school bus. therefore i would have 2 children at two different schools that start at the same time!!
Question 3 i would have to find childcare for my younger child whilst i take my older child to school
Case 51
Question 2 No comments given
Question 3 No comments given
Case 52
Question 2 The nearest designated school will not in a lot of cases be the most suitable one for the children involved and parents should not be penalised for wanting their child to attend a different school. Many children will have special needs and may only be able to attend certain schools.
Question 3 From a personal point of view, my son has special needs and we really only have one school suitable for his needs. If the proposal goes ahead, we will be forced to fund my son's travel to the only school that he can realistically attend due to his needs. This will place a huge financial burden upon us. My husband is in work but I do not work as I have had to dedicate a lot of my time to my son's care. We are not a low income family but we do receive disability living allowance and carers' allowance and so would find it expensive to meet the travel costs.
Case 53
Question 2 If we are in the catchment area for 2 schools we should be able to choose the most appropriate school for our child rather than take into account a large expense.
Question 3 At the moment as we are on a very low income we would still be able to access free school meals and transport. The search for employment would be influenced by the loss of these so I could be caught within unemployment if we elect for the second nearest school. We have to submit the choice by 31/10/12 without knowing if the proposed policy will be implemented.
Case 54
Question 2 I think this decision would be an absolute scandal and I would be absolutely disgusted if East Sussex went ahead with this quite ludicrous decision. As you point out we are living RURALLY, with many parents living on low incomes (however not necessarily free school meals) who only want what is best for their children. This NEVER means the local school is necessarily the best for their child. In fact it could be the complete opposite and this insulting 'proposal' would only be to the detriment of the education of our children. The way the education system is changing could mean in the future the nearest school could be specialising in something completely inappropriate. Also, if you arte putting forward this 'proposal' it would help if you gave a reason why and approximate costs so parents could make informed decisions. I am absolutely disgusted with ESCC, shame on you.

Question 3

I have three children and want the best education for them, if I have to pay for their transport this would have an extremely detrimental affect on our lifestyles. It could also seriously affect any extra curricular activities they do. My understanding is that East Sussex has some of the worst performing schools in the COUNTRY. This porsal could force children to attend schools that are inappropriate, not specialising in subjects they excel in, and ensure even worse results for the children and the schools. Really you need to think again but this would be an awful decision.

Case 55

Question 2

The closest school may not necessarily be the best placement for the child and restricting transport to the nearest school only takes away choice.

Question 3

A massive impact. My son who is still at primary school has special needs and could not cope with the security issues regarding buses at our nearest school and would be at risk. The further school from us currently has free rural transport which delivers into the school grounds so is the much better option. I cannot afford to pay for this transport.

Case 56

Question 2

It seems very unreasonable for a family with an existing child at the school, to have to consider sening their sibling to a different school, especially when we are on a low income - we receive help with music lessons etc. this is all the more galling whe we know of people living just beyond the 3 mile limit and are very rich and their children are entitled to to a taxi! Would it not be fairer to introduce means testing for all families already receiving or about to receive free transport!

Question 3

It will probably mean that my daughter who has been invited to play for East Sussex music band will have to give it up as well as all the other bands she playsmfor with East Sussex Musci, includinglessons, which will be devastating her but as we will have fund my son's transport to school and it wouldn't be fair not to let him have a choice schools, like his sister did.

Case 57

Question 2

No comments given

Question 3

I would have to pay for the bus for my child to go to Heathfield School as this is the school we have already applied for.

Case 58

Question 2

This policy removes freedom of choice to families. Schools are as individual and unique as a child and thus offer different opportunities, the facilities offered between these schools is very different, some are more academic and some lean more towards the arts. Also, the school sizes vary greatly (we have two in my area, one has 700 pupils and the other 3000) some children will prosper better in big schools whilst others will feel happier in a smaller school. Families may already have children at schools outside of their nearest designated school - how will this affect those children with continuity if the parents can no longer afford to send them to that school? Will they have to send siblings to another school thus breaking up a family which they may not want to do? How will it affect them financially if in order to maintain continuity or to keep sibling together? Having spoken to several parents at my school, there has been discussions on giving up work in order to take their children to and fro from their chosen school as it would be cheaper - enviromentally this increases polution as there will be an increase in parents transporting their children to and from their undesigned chosen schools. Not forgetting that once again families in a better financial position are able to chose the best school suitable to their childs individual needs than poorer parents - this really is an outrage in which the divide between the poor and wealthy is once again enforced! Lastly, families may be forced to move in order to go to their preferred school thus affecting family and community continuity.

Question 3

Both my children are young at present (8 and 5 years old) but I am very aware of their future

prospects and enjoy the knowledge that I live in an area in which I have 3 schools within close proximity to me (Rye 9m, Robertsbridge 8.9m and Tenterden 7.8m). The distance between these schools is negligible but the choice vast! As yet my daughter shows great promise towards the arts but is very shy, it is critically important to her future that she is able to choose which school she will feel most able to blossom into a confident, happy and able adult. Financially I may not be able to meet her needs if the choice of schools is removed and that may cost her her future!

Case 59

Question 2

this cannot be allowed to happen as this will remove any options for parental choice based on the individual child's needs. a school specialising in the arts eg rye may not suit a mathematical child eg robertsbridge. the cost of transport at £14 a week would equate to almost £600 a year which most hard pressed parents would struggle to find thus leaving them with only one option

Question 3

we could not afford such costs for one child let alone two or more so the ability to select schools would be removed and this will be detrimental educationally for many children

Case 60

Question 2

Where we live we have the choice of Rye or Robertsbridge school. We spent a lot of time choosing the right school for our children. Rye is a more artistic school whereas Robertsbridge is a maths and computer specialist school. Surely we shouldn't be penalised for matching the children with the most appropriate school? It could end up with parents having no choice due to financial constraints. I would struggle to pay for 3 children's bus fares each week

Question 3

I would struggle to pay for 3 children's bus fares and don't want that to be a deciding factor in school choice

Case 61

Question 2

the concept of choice is paramount in the current education system, by only supplying a bus pass to the nearest school you are effectively taking away the choice for people who live in the catchment areas that in 2 or more secondary schools

Question 3

my son already goes to a school that my next two children will go to, and now we are faced with an annual bill of £800 to send our children to a school in the area that we are in the catchment area for

Case 62

Question 2

My oldest child is at Heathfield CC and if I had to send my next youngest child to Hailsham CC in order to qualify for free school transport it would make life difficult for our family. Heathfield CC is in the catchment area for our village Herstmonceux so therefore it should qualify for free school buses otherwise it no longer becomes a viable option for many parents. My child wishes to go to Heathfield CC and I believe as it also offers a different specialism that my child is interested in (e.g. performing arts) he should have the chance to go to the school with no penalties.

Question 3

The proposed charges for bus transport would mean that our children would no longer be able to do valuable after school clubs such as being part of the Hailsham town football club, swimming lessons or scouts because we would no longer have that disposable income.

Case 63

Question 2

The only people that should decide where parents send their children is the parents.. This way you are taking the choice away for people that may struggle to pay....

Question 3

£14 a week....

Case 64
<p>Question 2</p> <p>I live in a dual catchment area ; but the proposal is to provide transport to one school only. This means you are taking away choice. The measurements to schools are based on using minor roads - not the actual roads that the buses can take. This means that there is a difference between the nearest school and the road that a bus can safely travel.</p>
<p>Question 3</p> <p>My 15 year old son would continue to have free transport to the school of our choice; whereas my 11 year old son would not be eligible to get on the same bus without paying over £600 per year. If he went to the other school - he would have to walk home alone from the bus stop to the rural location where we live ,rather than be accompanied by an older sibling. Uplands are considering providing subsidised mini-buses from Uplands to Mayfield - but it would not be acceptable to me for my 15 year old son to be on one transport and my 11 yr old - on another. I would also have to investigate the environmental impact of this situation - if I found that the main school bus had empty seats.</p>
Case 65
<p>Question 2</p> <p>I think it is totally unfair that our children should be restricted this way. When I was a child I lived in Horsmonden but used to go to secondary school in Tunbridge Wells, that was 10 miles. Had my family had to pay for all three children to travel there, we would have ended up at Mascalls in Paddock Wood, which at the time had an awful reputation. I am not saying that this is the case with Rye but our choice has always been Robertsbridge and it would be really difficult financially if the rules were to change. Just because cuts are being made everywhere else, don't destroy our future adults life by moving the goal post so only the wealthy can afford to send their children there.</p>
<p>Question 3</p> <p>I work for a Local Authority and I have already changed my hours 3 times to fit in with nurseries and schools. I could not possibly take them to Robertsbridge every morning and get there on time for pick up in the afternoon. The government want mothers to go out to work...they can't have it both ways! The amount of mothers there are on the roads trying to get their kids to school on time, get to work on time and be back to pick up from school is already bad enough, it will only get worse and end up in a serious accident one day.</p>
Case 66
<p>Question 2</p> <p>free transport should be given to school of choice within the catchment area, regardless of distance.</p>
<p>Question 3</p> <p>It appears I am equidistant to both schools relevant to my area, but I would not be surprised if there was some charge levied if the County Council could find a way.</p>
Case 67
<p>Question 2</p> <p>Nearest school may not necessarily be the most suitable school for an individual child. All children in this country should be entitled to a quality education and by removing free transport in this way you are narrowing choices for children from ordinary backgrounds. We already have huge divisions in quality of education with private schools and the knock on effect from grammar school in Kent.</p>
<p>Question 3</p> <p>We would find it very difficult to afford transport costs for our two children but want to be able to choose a state funded school in the local area for them based on what is most suitable for their needs, therefore giving them the best chance of success and not basing our decision purely on finances.</p>
Case 68
<p>Question 2</p> <p>I do not think it very fair to put a village into two school catchment area's then to say but really you only have one choice because we will not fund the journey to this school but we will to this one because in some cases the difference in distance is so minimal. Some people will have looked at the school area and picked to live in Burwash because of the choice by cutting the village in half you are literally dividing the community and in all probability this will affect house prices as well. A small minority will be able to pay, some people will get a choice because they are on income support and it</p>

doesn't matter to them because they get either school for free. It will be the middle income earners that are yet again hit the hardest taxed the most helped the least! by doing this you are taking away our choice when it is us middle income earners that pay the most this I think you would have to agree is hardly fair.

Question 3

Friends of our children who might have gone to Heathfield school may not choose it now because of the suggested withdrawl of funding this will impact on them settling in to school as easily as they would do with their peers. It would take away a school choice.

Case 69

Question 2

No comments given

Question 3

My child not oing to most suitable school for her

Case 70

Question 2

This will remove the choice currently given to pupils as each school is a specialist in different subjects - which may not suit all pupils. Also it will remove parental choice with regards "problem" friendships already formed at primary level.

Question 3

None as my child will be leaving Y11 in July.

Case 71

Question 2

No comments given

Question 3

No comments given

Case 72

Question 2

We are in the catchment area for two schools, how dare the Council even contemplate this when money is tight for everybody.

Question 3

I could not afford the bus fare for my children to Robertsbridge, I already have to cycle from Beckley to Biddenden as I cannot run a second car!

Case 73

Question 2

Not all schools are appropriate for all children and its important that there choice is not reduced by Transport needs. I think this is a policy which reduces choice for children and may need to considerable unhappiness for many children

Question 3

None personally as my children as too young for this at the moment. However it may reduce our options later on.

Case 74

Question 2

This could reduce a parents choice of school, if a school is within a catchment area transport should be provided equally to either

Question 3

Nonw as i understand from reading proposal

Case 75

Question 2

This effectively removes choice from parents to send their child to the school that is best suited to their child.

Question 3

It would force us to send our children to a school that we don't want our child to go to. We moved to the house we live in partly because it would mean we could send our children to Ringmer when it came time for them to start secondary school. We don't want our children to go to HCC, but as we live closer to Hailsham than Ringmer this will mean we can't get our children to Ringmer. We both work and it would not be possible for us to work and drive our children to and from Ringmer everyday.

Case 76

Question 2

How dare you take away a parents and childs choice of school, which is effectively what you are doing? The cost would be £14 a week to send them from the village I live in (Broad Oak) to Robertsbridge, and under your barbaric proposals free to go to Rye. However, there is only 0.5 miles difference in mileage to get there. Schools are changing, and their offerings too, what if my children do not excel in Arts and Enterprise, which is what Rye College specialises in? What if they want CHOICE? East Sussex - you disgust me.

Question 3

A huge impact. The cost of 5 years transport at £14 a week to Robertsbridge from Broad Oak would be over £2000, I have three children, so at least £6000, and what about sixth form if they want to carry on past 16. And this doesn't even take inflation into account. So, yes you would be ripping off taxpayers.

Case 77

Question 2

You should still have choice

Question 3

Cost

Case 78

Question 2

In Burwash children travelling to Heathfield community college will find it easier to get their children to Heathfield then Robertsbridge due to the country roads and the A21.

Question 3

My duahgter will have to pay - I am a single mother with no supprot from the childrens father I and many friends will alos suffer because of the cost

Case 79

Question 2

Given that schools are now specialising in different disciplines it seems that offering free travel to only the nearest school will take away the right to choose a school based on it's suitability to the child. The decision will instead be informed by individual financial situations and not what is deemed best for the child by the parents.

Question 3

Potentially, a financially huge one. I have three children and depending on what path their school careers take we could find ourselves with a bill of thousands for the years they are at school. Should a child's academic development at this age be decided by money?

Case 80

Question 2

I disagree for those who already have a sibling at that school. My son has always wanted to follow in his sister's footsteps to Uplands Community College and from a parents perspective there are many advantages to have siblings at the same school eg transport, fairness and being able to offer significant parental support to PTA, helping at Duke of Edinburgh events etc

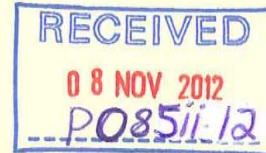
Question 3

As parents we would have to find around £600 a year for school transport that we have not budgeted for and with little notice. My son has set his heart on going to his Sister's school a long time ago and would feel aggrieved if he had to go to another school for unexpected financial reasons.

THE RT HON GREGORY BARKER MP
(BEXHILL & BATTLE)



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA



Cllr Peter Jones
Leader of the County Council
East Sussex County Council
County Hall
St Anne's Crescent
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 1UE

Our Ref: GB/AW/7782

31 October 2012

Dear Peter,

Burwash CE Primary School of School Hill, Burwash, Etchingam, East Sussex, TN19 7DZ

I have been contacted by a number of my constituents, including the Chair of Governors at Burwash CE Primary School, regarding the Council's current consultation on free transport arrangements for secondary school pupils. I enclose copies of some of the correspondence I have received.

I am very concerned by these proposals which I am certain will have a negative impact on families living in rural areas who will be affected by them. Under the present system, families who live in areas which are in the category of "joint area" can choose which secondary school they would like their children to attend as they know that they will also be entitled to support with their transport costs.

This proposal to limit transport funding to only one choice of school does seem very unfair. I would assume that the current transport costs to the Council for pupils who live in these areas must be roughly the same whichever school they attend and, on this basis, I can see very little logic to this proposal. However, if one might expect that many families will decide to bear the costs of school transport to ensure their children attend the school of their choice, then this policy might be viewed as an attempt by the Council to further reduce the school transport budget at the expense of local families, who are already experiencing tough economic times. It may also be seen as an attempt to limit parental choice for these families.

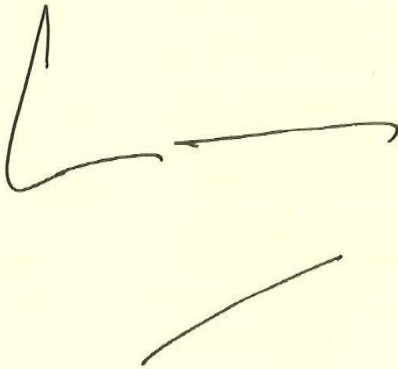
Please reply to constituency office: 6A Amherst Road, Bexhill-on-Sea, TN40 1QJ Tel. 01424 736861
Email: gregory.barker.mp@parliament.uk www.gregorybarker.com

This policy could potentially create a social divide in our small rural communities where only families on middle and higher incomes will be in a position to choose their children's secondary school. It would also mean that siblings may not be able to attend the same school if their parents cannot afford the new transport costs.

I would ask you to consider this proposal very carefully and listen to the views of people who may be affected by it. I would welcome your comments.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely,



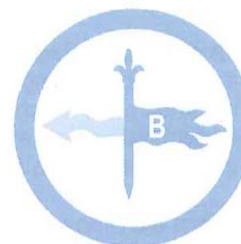
Enc

CC Cllr John Barnes

I really think there is a strong political point here, consistent with our Conservative pledge to offer greater choice to students - parents - would be extremely grateful for your support on this.
E.

Burwash CE Primary School

School Hill
 Burwash
 East Sussex
 TN19 7DZ
 Telephone: 01435 882440
 Fax: 01435 883020
 Email: office@burwash.e-sussex.sch.uk
 Website: www.burwash.e-sussex.sch.uk



Head of Admissions and Transport
 Children's Services
 East Sussex County Council
 PO Box 4
 St Anne's Crescent,
 Lewes. BN7 1SG

22nd October 2012

Dear Ms Locke,

Proposal to change Free Transport Arrangements for Secondary School Pupils.

I am writing on behalf of the Governing Body of Burwash CEP School, in response to the current consultation exercise on proposed changes to the free transport arrangements for secondary school children. **I would like to register our strong concerns** about this change for the children and parents of our school.

The children from Burwash fall into the category of a 'joint area', having access to both Heathfield Community College and Robertsbridge Community College. There is, however, a long history of the overwhelming majority of parents choosing to send their children to Heathfield CC. Over 90% of our Year 6 pupils have gone to Heathfield CC for many years and have benefited from free school transport. However, under the new proposals, the free transport could be in jeopardy, depending on which school is regarded as the 'nearest school'. The following illustration shows how marginal a decision this could be.

Information obtained from AA Route Planner

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| i) Burwash School to Heathfield CC, via Halley Road | 5.9 miles |
| ii) Burwash School to Robertsbridge CC via Brightling (<i>country roads</i>) | 4.9 miles |
| iii) Burwash School to Robertsbridge CC via Hurst Green & A21 | 7.9 miles |

So, if the second route via the 'back roads' from Burwash is used as a comparison, then Robertsbridge CC could be regarded as the closest school. (Although, we believe that the Robertsbridge School Bus does not in fact take this route but travels a longer distance). If Robertsbridge CC is regarded as the closest school under the new proposals and free school transport is, therefore, no longer offered for Heathfield CC, we believe that this has very serious financial implications for many of our parents and could severely limit their choice of secondary school.

As Governors, we are also concerned, that this could lead to a serious social divide opening
 Cont..12

Headteacher Debbie Gilbert
Chair of Governors Jan McKeever
 East Sussex County Council



up within the village community, with the more wealthy parents who are able to pay for transport continuing to send their children to Heathfield CC, whereas, the less well off may feel they have no choice but to send their children to Robertsbridge CC. This would undoubtedly generate a sense of 'elitism' and is very counter productive to all the strenuous efforts being made by schools to promote social cohesion.

There are many reasons why the vast majority of Burwash parents choose Heathfield CC but these include its academic reputation, its specialist status as a Performing Arts College and the integrated 6th form. Also due to the history, many primary pupils now have older siblings already attending the College. Our Head Teacher, Mrs. Gilbert attends the Heathfield Area Schools Partnership meetings, along with the other local Primary School Heads and as a result, enjoys a good working relationship with the Head Teacher of Heathfield CC, Mr Powell. This has allowed the staff of both schools to develop excellent transition arrangements for our Year 6 pupils and we know that because of this, the children settle in quickly and continue to make good progress during their time at Heathfield.

In comparison to the other feeder schools to Heathfield CC, Burwash is one of the larger rural primary schools, with 155 pupils on roll and our current Year 6 comprises 28 pupils. The vast majority have chosen Heathfield CC as their first choice. If free school transport is to be withdrawn, this will have consequences not only for Burwash parents but also for the longer term intake numbers at Heathfield CC.

In view of the marginality of the mileage differences between Burwash and the two secondary schools and the severe problems which would be created by abandoning free school transport to Heathfield CC, we would urge you to retain the current arrangements of offering free school transport to the Burwash parents, who wish to send their children to Heathfield Community College. This longstanding arrangement of children attending Burwash CEP school and then transitioning to Heathfield CC is very important to the community of Burwash and parents would not wish to have this choice restricted by onerous financial arrangements.

I thank you for your attention to these concerns and would be more than willing to discuss this with you in further detail. I can be contacted on 01435 882128.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Jan McKeever
Chair of Governors

Copied to:

Cllr Nick Bennett – Lead Member for Standards and Learning Effectiveness
Mr A. Powell – Head Teacher, Heathfield Community College.

MCKENNA, Frances

From: Matthew Davis [mailto:matt@datanews.co.uk]
Sent: 24 October 2012 13:58
To: MCKENNA, Frances
Subject: RE: Consultation on school transport.

From: Matthew Davis [mailto:matt@datanews.co.uk]
Sent: 12 October 2012 09:09
To: enquiries@gregorybarker.com
Subject: Ref: Consultation on school transport.

Ref: Consultation on school transport.

I have received today a letter from East Sussex county council advising me that there is a consultation in place to alter the rules in relation to children getting free transport from their home to school.

Herstmonceux, where I live, sits in one of the so-called "joint areas" where children have traditionally enjoyed free bus transport to either Hailsham Community College or Heathfield Community College. The proposed change, as I understand it, will mean that children in this area will in future only get free transport to Hailsham, and if they choose to go to Heathfield will have to pay for the privilege.

I already have one child at Heathfield, who under the proposals, will continue to be offered free travel. However, my daughter who is in Year 6 at present will incur a charge if she wants to go to the same secondary school as her brother. My understanding is that this will cost us something around £400 per year.

Of all the targets for council spending cuts it seems a shoddy affair to pick upon the futures of 10-year-old girls. What am I to do? Send her to a different secondary school from her brother and encounter all the complications of having two children at two different schools, neither of which are particularly close to my home? Or do I put up and pay the £400?

Fortunately I'm in a position where I can afford the extra money. But it doesn't mean that I don't begrudge paying it. I am your typical "striver" or "grafter", call me what you like, but why is it that my pocket is being picked for the failure of the bankers/regulators/Government? The millionaires in the cabinet will not have to make hard financial choices like this. For them austerity is all theory – we are the ones at the sharp end.

Some families will not have the disposal income to afford the fares and will inevitably end up with a child at one school and a child or children at another. It is unfair and exposes once and for all the myth of parental choice about which school they send their children to.

A questions for you, and it would be nice to have a straight yes or no answer.

1. Will you write to the council in opposition to the proposed changes?

I am sure if you took the time to see the bus full of children heading off from the village every morning to Heathfield School, you would appreciate how much this will affect our community.

Yours sincerely,
Matthew Davis

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Willow House, Oxenbridge Lane, Etchingam, East Sussex, TN19 7AA

01580 819018

uplandsbus7@gmail.com

11th October 2012

Dear Mr Barker

Following all our correspondence last year over the school bus from Etchingam and Hurst Green to Uplands Community College we wanted to get back in touch to seek your views and support over the general issue of school transport within East Sussex.

It has come to our attention that there is a consultation currently taking place that is seeking to further restrict parental choice within East Sussex for those who do not have the ability to pay. The current consultation affects those families who live in an area where two school catchments overlap. ESCC are seeking to provide school transport to the closest school only thereby making cost an overriding factor in making school choices.

There is effectively no parental choice in rural East Sussex without the ability to pay for it. Do we really want to live in a country where a child's access to education is restricted by the parent's ability to pay?

We have an insane system where schools are expected to take on a specialist status and 'sell' their schools to families, but a transport system that means only those who can afford to pay stand a chance of actually gaining access to the school of their choice if it happens to fall outside of their catchment.

If ESCC do not wish to operate a policy where parental choice is a fair and equal option, why can they not be honest and say so? Why must we be sold the charade that parental choice exists when the reality is that it only exists for those who can afford it.

If we are to be restricted to our catchment school then we need to stop creating specialist schools and make sure that all schools offer the same. If there is no choice then EVERY senior school should offer a sixth form facility at the very least.

We understand that next year is a low birth year and as so Uplands will be looking to fill places with children coming from Kent. ESCC should be ashamed that children living within their own country cannot afford to access their preferential school due to school transport costs whilst children from Kent fill the places and pay only £100 a year.

It is not fair or just that children from rural East Sussex are penalised for living in this county whilst children from Kent who don't make the grade or choose not to embrace the Grammar system fill up our schools.

We have to value a parent's right to choose the school that best meets the educational needs of their child and ESCC need to overhaul their school transport policy with equality of access at the heart of the decision making process and not saving money which is the driving force behind all current policy decisions.

The school transport policy in East Sussex is shameful and it is about time ESCC are made to clarify their position on parental choice and the lack of equality in access to educational opportunity. We would really like you to raise this issue as a matter of the upmost urgency and would appreciate your advice as to how we can bring local and national attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Smith

For and on behalf of the Uplands Bus Action Group

MCKENNA, Frances

From: BARKER, Gregory
Sent: 15 October 2012 12:47
To: MCKENNA, Frances
Subject: FW: East Sussex County Council - Home to School Transport proposal

From: JULIA WELCH [<mailto:jawelch1@btinternet.com>]
Sent: 15 October 2012 12:18
To: enquiries@gregorybarker.com
Subject: Fw: East Sussex County Council - Home to School Transport proposal

Dear Mr Barker

Please would you take a moment out of your busy schedule to read the e.mail below. I have been advised to bring this to your attention, and hope you can help us. It may seem a small item amongst the many issues that you deal with, but will have a dramatic effect on our community if the proposal goes ahead.

Thank you very much for your time.

Yours sincerely

Julia Welch

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: JULIA WELCH <jawelch1@btinternet.com>
To: "cllr.david.vereker@rother.gov.uk" <cllr.david.vereker@rother.gov.uk>; Mary BlancheHawker-Hayes <maryhayes@btconnect.com>; "cllr.john.barnes@eastsussex.gov.uk" <cllr.john.barnes@eastsussex.gov.uk>
Sent: Monday, 15 October 2012, 12:12
Subject: East Sussex County Council - Home to School Transport proposal

GOOD MORNING,

PLEASE CAN YOU HELP THE RESIDENTS OF BURWASH KEEP FREE TRANSPORT TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

Are you aware of the consultation that is being carried out by East Sussex County Council regarding Home to School Transport?

You may be aware that every home address in East Sussex falls within a "community area" and this is the area that is served by a secondary school or in **some cases more than one secondary school.**

It is those rural areas that are served by more than one secondary school that would be affected by the current proposal from September 2013 and this includes **Burwash CEP**. The areas that would be affected are known as "joint areas".

At the moment if you live in a "joint area", as people of Burwash do, the effect is that whether you choose Robertsbridge or Heathfield Community College **the transport to either school will be provided free of charge.**

However the County Council is proposing to change this from September 2013, so that transport will only be provided to the nearest school (which must also be over three miles away).

For most of Burwash, Robertsbridge Community College is the nearest school, which will mean that if you choose Heathfield Community College (which majority choose) you will have to pay your child's transport costs to and from school (if you can get a place on the bus). Over the last few years the majority of pupils have moved on to HCC from Burwash, some to RCC and a very small proportion have moved on to another school altogether. People in Burwash are very lucky to have the choice of both RCC and HCC and it would seem a great shame if this choice were now curtailed, as families may be unable to afford the transport costs. In financial terms the cost for a place on the HCC bus will be £114 a term or approximately £700 a year (from Burwash to HCC).

Typically, those on low income (ie entitled to free school meals) are not affected, but there are plenty of hard working families, still on low income (but not low enough to qualify !) that will really struggle, and especially if more than one child requiring transport. Some people will not have the option of driving instead as they do not have a car.

The consultation runs from 17 September 2012 to 31 October 2012, and we have only just been notified of it. If you have children in year 6 due to go onto secondary school next september 2013, you have to get your application in by 31 October 2012 (same deadline), so not good timing.

It seems totally unreasonable to withdraw this service, it will become a "postcode lottery" and the impact, if this proposal goes ahead, will have a dramatic effect on the village. If people don't get free transport this will result in more cars on the road, more pollution, as parents will opt to drive their children to school, more traffic outside the school and a higher risk of accidents, with more vehicles coming and going. In extreme weather conditions, (snow/ice) parents will not be able to get their cars out, and the children will not get to school, whereas if going by bus, the main roads tend to be clear, and you can walk to the bus stop.

If this is put into action it is highly unlikely to be reversed in the future, so it does affect **ALL** children.

Please can you help us to keep the current system in place **FREE TRANSPORT TO EITHER SCHOOL**

The survey is online at (eastsussex.gov.uk/haveyoursay)

I look forward to hearing from you.

Julia Welch
(Parent / Resident of Burwash)

MCKENNA, Frances

From: BARKER, Gregory
Sent: 19 October 2012 10:31
To: MCKENNA, Frances
Subject: FW: Heathfield school bus consultation

From: jennie mackay [<mailto:jenniemackay69@yahoo.co.uk>]
Sent: 18 October 2012 18:24
To: enquiries@gregorybarker.com
Subject: Heathfield school bus consultation

Dear Mr Barker

I understand that East Sussex County Council is holding a consultation with a view to altering the rules in relation to children getting free transport from their home to school.

I live in Herstmonceux/Windmill Hill, one of the so-called "joint areas" where children have traditionally enjoyed free bus transport to either Hailsham Community College or Heathfield Community College. The proposed change will mean that children in this area will in future only get free transport to Hailsham, and if they choose to go to Heathfield will have to pay for the privilege.

My understanding is that this will cost us around £400 per year. The imposition of this levy on my child's education seems grossly unfair and exposes the myth of parental choice in relation to picking secondary schools.

Of all the targets for council spending cuts it seems a shoddy affair to pick upon the hopes of primary school aged children.

If the proposal is pushed through we will have the bizarre scenario of siblings getting the same council bus to Heathfield – the younger child having to pay and the older one still qualifying for free transport.

I am sure if you took the time to see the bus full of children heading off from the village every morning to Heathfield School, you would appreciate how much this will affect our community.

Can you please ensure that this levy does not happen.

Yours sincerely,

Jennie Mackay

MCKENNA, Frances

From: BARKER, Gregory
Sent: 17 October 2012 13:58
To: MCKENNA, Frances
Subject: FW: Home to school transport

-----Original Message-----

From: louisewaghorn@tiscali.co.uk [<mailto:louisewaghorn@tiscali.co.uk>]
Sent: 17 October 2012 13:26
To: enquiries@gregorybarker.com
Subject: Home to school transport

Dear Mr Barker,

I am writing to express my alarm at the proposal to charge children to attend school if they chose to attend one further away despite being in the catchment for that school.

In Herstmonceux

there is really only a choice of 2 schools. Both pretty good but with very different specialties, Heathfield has the Arts as it's specialism and Hailsham Sport. The fact that free transport will only be provided to Hailsham means that many people will be compelled to send their children to a school they would rather not. It takes away parental choice and will make a major hole in family finances. As a rural community we rely on the school bus, clearly we cannot walk to school.

We are already at a major disadvantage with public transport and this will further marginalise us.

My daughter attends and enjoys a free bus

ride at the moment so if this plan goes ahead we will be forced to either pay up or have children at different schools or at a school that does not suit their talents or be seriously out of pocket each month at a time when we are all already suffering.

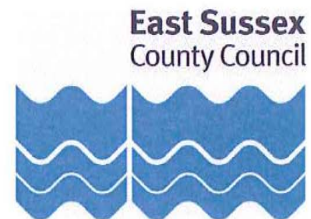
Please vote support us against this idea.

Yours sincerely
Louise Waghorn

Councillor Peter Jones

Leader of the Council

Cabinet Office
County Hall
St Anne's Crescent
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 1UE



The Rt Hon Gregory Barker MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

Our Ref
P085.12/VF

Date
29 November 2012

Dear Greg

Thank you for your letter dated 31 October 2012 which I apologise for the delay in sending you a reply.

The consultation on transport for pupils living in areas that are served by two schools opened on 17 September 2012 and closed on 31 October 2012. The outcome of that consultation is currently being analysed and no decision has been taken yet. I confirm your letter and enclosures will be taken into consideration.

The proposal put forward was to provide transport for children living in these areas to the nearest school provided the eligibility criteria are met. This is not a change from the County Council's published transport policy. However, the County Council has been more generous in the past by providing transport to either school, again provided the eligibility criteria are met. Families have therefore enjoyed this discretionary benefit that has not been available to other families who live in areas served by only one school and therefore the current situation is inconsistent for families across the County.

It is important to note that if a decision is taken to no longer continue with this discretionary benefit current recipients will continue to receive support with transport under the old interpretation of the policy until their circumstances change. The change would not affect families designated as low income (i.e. entitled to free school meals).

You have stated that this proposal could affect parental choice. All parents have the right to state which school they would prefer their child to attend. Transport to school is a consideration all families should make when submitting school applications. This consultation was timed to coincide with applications for children transferring from primary to secondary school so that they could make their decisions with the knowledge that the discretionary support may not continue from September 2013. The closing date for receipt of applications was 31 October 2012 and although we do not have exact figures as yet, early indications suggest that the number of first preferences for the schools serving these areas are very similar to last year. The proposal would therefore appear to have had very little or no impact on parental preference.

...../Cont'd

We are of course aware of the additional financial pressures placed on all families and that this will need to be balanced against the need to promote fairness and consistency. A decision on this reinterpretation of the existing policy is due to be made in the New Year and will take into account the outcome of the consultation responses.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'PJ Jones', is written below the text 'Yours sincerely'.

Councillor Peter Jones
Leader

