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Head Teacher: Mr J Brooks B Ed (Hons) NPQH



Where we aspire, personalize, engage and promote success

14th February 2018

Dear Mr Meredith,

Thank you for your letter dated 1st February 2018, which accompanied the internal audit report for Maplewell Hall School's residential provision. Whilst I fully understand the reason for the audit of residential costs, I cannot see how the school's after school care is relevant to any conversations regarding residence whatsoever. They are both very separate. For the convenience of consultation, the Local Authority seems to have merged them into one.

Whilst I appreciate that the Local Authority has significantly overspent on the High Needs Block, I find it saddening that a consistently outstanding provision that improves educational outcomes for young people is earmarked for closure. I have taken the liberty of attaching our latest residential Ofsted report, which was carried out under the new social care framework.

During the consultation, was it coincidence that Maplewell Hall School received a visit at 4 o'clock in the morning, in order to check fire safety? After this occurrence, I wrote to you asking why this was allowed to take place at such an inconvenient time. I also asked why the school had never received anything like this before. The disruption and worry caused to



staff and students was significant, especially around Halloween when there are a number of anti-social behaviours that take place across the county. Having spoken to colleagues across the county, this seems to be isolated to Maplewell Hall School. I was given assurances that names of people who were planned to visit would be forwarded to me if such practice was to be replicated. A more reasonable time was also discussed. I asked for the welfare of the children to be considered. Waking up children with special needs, including autism, in the early hours on a school night is simply unacceptable. Despite assurances, this happened again, at a similar time in the early hours. I consider such behaviour to be thoughtless at best. Some would consider it to be a form of harassment.

The party line has been that residence is not included on any child's EHCP. This is perfectly true and from a purely social care background could be used as a tool for the closure of residence. However, from an educational perspective, things are very different. I would suggest greater scrutiny of how monies have been spent across the board, including the historical and extensive use of privately run provision that has been commissioned by the Local Authority. Such provision continues to be utilised by the Local Authority such as Hardwick House, the Griffin School and Woodside Lodge to name but a few. Such places cost tens of thousands of pounds each, varying between £55k and £70k per place. There are many others too. As part of the High Needs overspend the use of such provision must surely be scrutinised by the Local Authority and elected members. I guarantee that none of these have such strong academic outcomes as Maplewell Hall School.

What is the real reason for the high needs overspend? This is a question that must surely be answered before deciding to close an outstanding residential provision. Members should have the full funding breakdown for the High Needs block, rather than considering Maplewell in isolation. This will help to them to make an informed decision rather than basing their decision on a solitary audit report, much of which is irrelevant and pointless.

Maplewell's specialist autism provision, in its second year, was established in order to provide a high quality alternative to private providers. As such, it is projected to save the Local Authority in excess of £2m over a 3 year period, compared to the average costs of privately run centres. Outcomes are also stronger for those students who attend Maplewell. This will go a long way to alleviating the pressure on the Local Authority's overspend. This demonstrates that solutions can be found if there is a genuine commitment to work together. It was myself that approached the Local Authority in the first instance.

I understand that there will further overspends in the High Needs Block in future. One such drain on resources is the funding of behaviour partnerships. I would implore the Local Authority and elected members to investigate the use of monies in this area, paying particular regard to outcomes. Surely we want value for money. An independent investigation should be sought in order to determine whether behaviour partnerships represent good value for money. Unlike Maplewell, such provision is not outstanding and does not represent good value for money. A similar argument could be made for Oakfield School, which has had a chequered past. Would it be prudent to commission an audit of the use of monies in this area too?



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The autism outreach service still exists within the local authority. Does their funding come from the High Needs Block? If so, one should question whether the service represents good value for money. There are a number of schools who commission autism experts but is the service cost neutral or is it again heavily subsidised by the Local Authority? Such figures should be shared as part of the review of the High Needs Block overspend.

I recently discovered that autism outreach was brokering deals with private providers in order that they can support with transition. In one such instance they were asking for a daily fee to be paid by a maintained school to a private provider. Why is such practice allowed to happen? This is a great drain on the resources of the Local Authority.

With reference to the audit report, (section 2.2), the school see residence and after-school activities as two very separate entities. Section 3.1 refers to 'meetings' held with myself and other staff. To clarify, I had one initial meeting with _____ who was at pains to point out that he could not understand why he had been asked to undertake such work. The way that the report is written is misleading and I would like amendments to be made, in addition to the removal of all staff names.

I have been employed at Maplewell for in excess of 11 years. The funding of residence has always been consistent and I understand that this was the case for many years before. During the discussions with _____ it was agreed that residential funding was historic and a fixed sum. The audit report refers to the school using excess residential funds being used to pay off the school's existing deficit. This is not and never has been the case. Such assumptions simply serve to feed conspiracy theories that Maplewell has somehow misled people. This is not the case. It could be seen as supporting evidence, commissioned by the Local Authority, for the closure of Maplewell's residential provision. I must protest most strongly regarding the biased writing of the report.

Staffing, catering, heating costs and various sundries for residence have been stripped out in the audit. However, _____ did acknowledge during the initial meeting that it was an impossible task to separate all costs. A line that he has subsequently stuck to. However, his report clearly contains contradictions. Despite this, Appendix A seems to indicate the 'true' costs of residence. This is in direct conflict with what _____ said in our initial meeting. It contradicts what he has written in the main body of the report.

The report does make reference that it is the Governors of Maplewell Hall School that have delegated responsibility for the management of the budget. There is no restriction on



money allocated for residence to be spent elsewhere. Yet the audit seems to indicate that such practice is unacceptable. This is common practice for all maintained schools, but is being used against Maplewell Hall School at this point. Such information is completely irrelevant to the proposed closure of residence and sets a dangerous precedent for all maintained schools.

The audit report is written in such a way that it implies that Maplewell Hall School has somehow mismanaged funds to get itself into deficit. This is not the case and I can categorically state that the school went into deficit previously due to the fraudulent activities of the former Business Manager. This was reported in the press, where she was found guilty and given a suspended sentence for the theft of in excess of £15000. This is money that was 100% proved that she had taken. Significantly more money had been taken, plunging the school into serious deficit, yet it was only the aforementioned figure that was proven. In her role as Business Manager, she had presented false accounts to myself, as Headteacher, and Governors. Such practice was missed by the Local Authority's Bursar Service at the time. Claire Turner was to blame for the school's deficit and her alone, as was proven in court. Her dismissal was further proof of her theft from employer. The audit report is totally wrong to imply that the school was at fault for such actions, whether directly or indirectly. Due to prudence and a restructure the school has been out of deficit since August 2017.

When we previously met, I mentioned that it was a short-sighted strategy from the Local Authority to close the residential provision. The skills that students learn are invaluable. The Local Authority seems to think that it is simply used as a respite provision. On the odd occasion this is true. Students have needed somewhere to sleep when they and their families are in crisis. This is when social care has been unable to respond quickly enough to their needs. This is when families have been at breaking point, refusing to have their children home, as their whole world is falling apart. Residence has provided those families with a lifeline, where other agencies could not. It is a fantastic pressure valve for families. This is crucial work that nobody else can provide.

Residence is more than simply respite. It provides children with a community, a group of friends, an opportunity for children with moderate learning difficulties and autism to experience what friendship is really like. Our students do not have opportunities to take part in such activities and interact with a group of their peers away from school. Their needs do not allow them to do so in their own communities. They become confined to their own homes with few opportunities to socialise, as mainstream children do.

Residence provides our students with the opportunity to learn life skills that are crucial for independent living. Learning how to look after oneself properly, making beds, shopping, cooking and cleaning are crucial for their future independence. Many of our students do go onto employment and live independently. Without residence they will simply not have the opportunity to learn such skills. This will lead to greater pressure on social care system further down the line, when they will need to learn these skills at a later stage and it will significantly reduce their chances of leading an independent life. Social care will be picking up the bill at a later stage. Closing residence is a false economy. A short-term 'fix'.



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I have been told by [redacted] that Maplewell Hall School having a residential facility is not fair on children who attend other special schools in Leicestershire. This argument simply does not stand up to scrutiny. If this is the case, will the Local Authority be closing sensory rooms and swimming pools in other special schools, as Maplewell does not have such facilities? As Headteacher, I accept that all schools have different types of provision, as do my fellow headteachers of special schools and the parents and carers of children who attend special schools across the county. Residence is at the heart of Maplewell Hall School. It is what makes the school truly unique, as evidenced in the numerous quality assurance reports over the years, from School Improvement Advisors, Ofsted and the Local Authority's very own school improvement team this academic year. It isn't a case of closing a provision. It is more like 'ripping the heart out' of the school. The overwhelming support from parents, professionals and staff should not be ignored. The petition of in excess of 11500 names and the support of Nicky Morgan, a former Minister for education, and Ed Agar, who both visited the school, should not be ignored.

I have had the great pleasure of working in Leicestershire for the past 28 years. During that time, I have worked in a variety of settings. I have always been proud to be associated with Leicestershire Local Authority. I have also performed the role of Executive Headteacher at Blaby PRU, which was acknowledged at the time by Gareth Williams and Frances Craven. I am an experienced practitioner, Headteacher at Maplewell for 6 years, senior leader for 12 years and Governor for 3 years. I also advise a number of schools on school improvement in another capacity for a national organisation. My passion for education in Leicestershire is unwavering and my purpose is to provide the very best education for all children. My experience is vast and my opinion should count. I have the educational expertise that nobody involved in the consultation seems to have. Maplewell should be held up as the jewel in the crown for the outstanding all-round education of young people with special needs. Instead, it is being stripped of its most prized asset.

Maplewell has children with special needs. They deserve more. They deserve a world class education and we currently provide it, going over and above at all times, making the difference to their lives. They achieve higher grades due to residence, as evidenced in the latest Ofsted report. They learn vitally important life skills thanks to residence. They learn how to socialise effectively thanks to residence and they build vital emotional resilience thanks to residence. It is a truly fantastic package that is offered to students at Maplewell.



Closed means closed. It is forever. This is a huge decision that will affect so many vulnerable peoples' lives, students and families. It will also cost the Local Authority in future social care costs.

Although it has been made clear that the Local Authority will not compromise whatsoever on the closure of residence, I do have a couple of proposals to put forward. One proposal would be to keep residence open and for the Local Authority to pay for the staffing costs of residence, which equates to £140k per annum. This would represent a saving of £147k per year, providing the Local Authority with a significant saving year on year, and allow residence to continue. Such a figure does not cover the full cost of residence but as a school we will find prioritise monies in order to keep residence open.

The second would be to fund the staffing costs for a one-year period whilst the school investigates the option of taking a community business approach, where income is generated by the school in order to sustain residence. More time in order to further develop this option would be a reasonable compromise. I recently met Emma Compton, Director of Resource Factor Limited. They specialise in transforming community ideas into action that matters. Initial talks have been encouraging. She briefly explained a deal of success that she has with community support and action in the education field. Specifically, she was able to share situations where a community (whether geographical or interest-based) worked together to support an educational establishment where public funds were not forthcoming. There were various ways in which this has worked, including "buying in" to a proposal, thus keeping the establishment going. Ms Compton thought that the residential situation here at Maplewell Hall School might well lend itself to this kind of action. I have attached Ms Compton's thoughts on the future of Maplewell Hall School.

In summary, I would like elected members to scrutinise the bigger picture regarding the proposed closure of residence. There are a host of factors that contribute to the High Needs Block overspend. I have outlined but a few. However, without an independent assessment of what represents value for money in these areas, it is nigh on impossible for elected members to make an informed decision. would will be able to provide much of the relevant detail for elected members. Please consider all areas before closing such a wonderful and life-changing provision. I have taken the liberty of sending this letter to all elected members in order that they fully understand my views and those of the Governing Body at Maplewell Hall School, something which Counsellor Ould had previously requested. I am eager to work with the Local Authority in order that an acceptable solution can be found, but cannot stand by whilst such a fantastic asset is stripped away from the Local Authority and the families and children that depend on it.

I am more than happy to discuss the contents of this letter with you or any elected members if further clarification is required.

Yours sincerely
Jason Brooks
Headteacher



Mr J. Brooks
Headteacher
Maplewell Hall School
Woodhouse Eaves
Loughborough
LE12 8QY

Date	2 March 2018
Ref	PM957/msb
Your Ref	
Contact	Paul Meredith
Phone	0116 305 7441
Fax	0116 3056310
email	paul.meredith@leics.gov.uk

Dear Mr Brooks

I refer to your letter dated 14th February 2018 sent to me by email on 16th February 2018 relating to the audit report and statutory proposal concerning the residential facilities at Maplewell Hall School.

As I mentioned to you, I think it would have been very helpful if we could have had a discussion about this at the meeting which was scheduled for 1st February with the Lead Member Mr Ould and myself which unfortunately you did not attend.

I am unclear as to the status of your letter dated 14th February. It has been received after the closure of the representation period for a response to the Statutory Notice and cannot therefore be considered as a response to that notice. I note also that your letter states that it is submitted in response to the audit report although much of the content is wholly unrelated to that document and instead makes general representations in relation to the future arrangements for the provision.

However, taking those points that you have made about the audit report (and having taken advice from the Head of Service) I would respond as follows:

Con't...

Children and Family Services,
Leicestershire County Council, County Hall, Glenfield
Telephone 0116 3232323 Email: childrensservices@leics.gov.uk

Paul Meredith, Director of Children and Family Services

www.leics.gov.uk

- a. You make the observation (page 3 para 4) that *'The audit report refers to the school using excess residential funds being used to pay off the school's existing deficit. This is not and never has been the case. Such assumptions simply serve to feed conspiracy theories that Maplewell has somehow misled people.'*

If the level of residential funding is significantly in excess of the costs of provision then it follows that the 'excess' has been utilised elsewhere within the School budget, and subsequently has helped to reduce the deficit. The report is clear (i) that the reduction to the deficit is an indirect consequence of 'overfunding'; but (ii) is not considered by the Auditor to have been an unlawful use of funds.

- b. I do not accept that the report *'is written in such a way that it implies that Maplewell Hall School has somehow mismanaged funds to get itself into deficit'* as alleged in your letter (page 4 para 2). The scope of the audit did not include making any judgement about the school's historic deficit and no work was undertaken to review this nor were any comments made about why the deficit was so high in the past. The report is clear that there is no suggestion of financial impropriety on the part of the school or governing body in the management of the delegated budget.

- c. You state (page 3 para 3) that the Officer who undertook the audit was *'...at pains to point out that he could not understand why he had been asked to undertake such work'*.

The officer concerned has informed me that he has no recollection of making such a statement but he recalls explaining to you that he had not been involved previously in any issue to do with the Maplewell residential provision and so was asking questions about something in relation to which, at that time, he had limited knowledge.

Save for the three issues commented on below, I do not intend to go through point by point the other matters that you have raised in your letter as these are covered either in the cabinet report, will be addressed directly to cabinet at the meeting or relate to other SEND services which do not directly relate to the matter in hand.

Fire safety

I confirm that there is no link whatsoever between the fire safety visit referred to which took place in October 2017 and the proposal in relation to the residential facility. As you are aware from the various correspondences we have had on this matter the visit was made as part of the review of fire safety risk in all Leicestershire schools following the tragedy at Grenfell Tower. One of the main areas of fire risk identified by the DFE relates to schools with a residential facility; Maplewell Hall School is the only LA maintained school in this category which accounts for your school alone being visited in this way. It is disappointing that you have chosen to view the Council's diligence in relation to this vitally important safety issue as a negative event or act of harassment.

The Council's commissioning arrangements

You refer to the Council '*brokering deals with private providers in order that they can support with transition. In one such instance they were asking for a daily fee to be paid by a maintained school to a private provider*'

The Children and Family Service does commission places from independent providers to support the education of young people if their assessed need indicates that this would assist them to achieve their outcomes. Where the child is on the roll of a maintained school, part of the costs of this provision may well be met by that school. This is an entirely appropriate arrangement.

The Council's staff

I note that your letter refers specifically to a member of staff within my department who has been working throughout under my direction to advance these proposals. You have focussed on one member of a team who were all engaged in this work and who were all party to discussions with you about the proposed changes. I am deeply concerned about this and I regard your comments in relation to this member of my staff and your colleague as overly personal, inappropriate and unprofessional. Whilst I was aware that some tensions existed between you and members of my staff emanating from the proposals at no time have the detailed assertions in your letter been raised formally via the correct procedure. I have a duty of care towards staff in my department which I take seriously and I cannot see any basis in your letter for the allegations that you have made about the way in which this task has been approached as being accurate. It is inappropriate and professionally damaging to the member of staff in question for your unfounded allegations to be placed into a public facing document. Accordingly, I have taken steps to remove these references from your letter in order that this material may be presented to the Cabinet in due course when they consider the proposals. I have no option other than to bring the allegations you have made to the attention of the member of staff concerned and will ensure that they are supported in relation to this matter particularly bearing in mind your comment that you have '*taken the liberty of sending this letter to all elected members*'.

I trust the above sets out my position.

Yours sincerely



Paul Meredith
Director, Children & Family Services

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From Mr S D Sheahan CC

Submission to Cabinet, 9th March 2018

Item 5 - DETERMINATION OF STATUTORY NOTICE FOR THE REMOVAL (CLOSURE) OF RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES AT MAPLEWELL HALL SPECIAL SCHOOL

The contribution of the residential facilities to the overall educational outcomes of pupils at Maplewell has sadly been underestimated, as have the longer term costs of removing them. The prolonged financial climate of austerity has led to an increasing number of short-sighted decisions in local government, which are stoking up problems for subsequent years. The closure decision will leave future cohorts of vulnerable young people less well equipped in terms of life and social skills, which are a solid platform for future attainment.

Maplewell has achieved real value for its pupils through the maintenance of a residential offer, which more than justifies the monetary cost. A resolution perhaps could be found and a substantial saving still made, with a more flexible and creative approach and perhaps a little more time. I hope the Cabinet will seriously consider the local member's suggestion to delay the closure decision and give Maplewell's highly-valued residential facilities a further chance.

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**COMMENTS FROM MR. D. C. BILL CC, COUNTY COUNCILLOR FOR HOLLYCROFT DIVISION
(VIA EMAIL, 8/3/18)**

Can I please ask that the attached exchange about congestion problems on the A5 at Hinckley is reported to the Cabinet at its meeting tomorrow. It is illustrative of existing problems which grow worse by the day and which need to be taken into account in any plans to reconstruct the road.

In addition can I please ask for the following to be reported to the Cabinet - Although there is a reference in paras 10 and 11 of the report to bridge strikes and the consequent impact on local roads this is by no means the whole story.

In practice the A5 acts as a local distributor road as well as an important long distance route. Even when it is moving smoothly there are always traffic flows in and out of Hinckley, Burbage, Higham and Wykin. At peak times and increasingly at other times both HGV traffic and other vehicles cause congestion problems in Lutterworth Road, Rugby Road, Nutts Lane and Coventry Road. With an increasing amount of traffic on the A 47 which shares the same road as the A5 for a short period there are frequent tailbacks on all the approach roads to the Dodwells Roundabout.

There is a 200 year old bridge over the Ashby Canal in Nutts Lane and the constant flow of HGV traffic over the bridge is a real danger to mothers with prams and children who have no other way to get into town.

An alternative route to the A5 when it is congested is through Higham and Wykin and of course drivers of all vehicles make good use of this alternative route with all the consequent impact this has on the two villages.

I therefore suggest that there are two imperatives which need to be borne in mind if and when the road is finally dualled, or before if at all possible -

- the need to rebuild the road under the railway bridge so that lorry strikes no longer occur
- the need to drastically reduce the impact on local roads which lead on to the A5.

Regards

David

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

From: Marriott, Ivan [highwaysengland]

Sent: 28 February 2018 21:44

To: [Mr. Bill]

Subject: RE: Massive housing estate set to get go ahead despite objections - Hinckley Times 11012156

Dear Councillor Bill,

Thank you for your e-mail of 6 February expressing your concerns regarding proposed developments in the Nuneaton and Hinckley area.

As you are aware, the main objective of the proposed Dodwells to Longshoot Improvement is to reduce congestion in the area, particularly along the A5 and A47 corridors. I can confirm that during the development of this scheme, developments that are considered to be near certain or more than likely to be built will be included in the scheme traffic assessment. This in turn will be used to determine the benefits gained from providing an additional lane in each direction between Dodwells roundabout and the Longshoot junction.

With regard to future development, Highways England is a delivery partner for growth and the National Planning Policy Framework states that we have to plan positively for growth. As part of that function we consider each planning application on its own merit in line with Government Guidance as set out in the Department for Transport Circular 02/2013 'The strategic road network and the delivery of sustainable development.'

We ensure that the traffic impact from proposals on the strategic road network can be suitably accommodated by appropriate mitigation works and advise the appropriate local planning authorities accordingly. However, we cannot lawfully require any proposal to mitigate the impacts and effects of another proposal.

Please be reassured that Highways England will continue to work closely with local authorities on the A5 corridor and we are a member of the A5 Partnership. Midlands Connect, a collaboration of local authorities, local enterprise partnerships and central government, including Highways England, are also working together to deliver a transport strategy for the Midlands.

One of the early priorities within this strategy is to undertake a study of the A5 corridor between the M1 Junction 18 and M42 Junction 10. This will inform Midlands Connect's ambitions for the development of the A5 corridor.

Kind regards

Ivan Marriott

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

From: David Bill

Sent: 06 February 2018 09:37

To: Area 7 Enquiries [Highways England]

Subject: FW: Massive housing estate set to get go ahead despite objections - Hinckley Times

F.A.O.

Mr Ivan Marriott

Dear Mr Marriott

With reference to your email to me dated 16th November can I please draw your attention to the planning consent now granted for an additional 850 houses on the new estate in Nuneaton as outlined in the attached article from the Hinckley Times. Together with the exactly the same number exiting from the Bloors development on Normandy Way in Hinckley it is obvious that there is to be massive and unwelcome impact on the Dodwells roundabout whichever way the traffic impact is calculated.

Further down the A5 there is a planning application for another DPD development adjacent to the Hinckley Island Hotel and a little further a 750 acre freight depot served by a proposed A46 Expressway all of which is bound to have an impact on the local road network.

Leaving aside for a moment these future developments I have to report that our immediate problems are worsening with last week traffic at a standstill for over a mile on the M69 with the queue caused by congestion on the A5 and the bottleneck at Dodwells and motorists leaving Hinckley on Coventry Road having to wait through 8 cycles of traffic light changes to move forward.

Can you please give me any assurance that there are plans to alleviate our immediate problems and that there is a long term plan to address the future traffic demands which will result from the additional DPD development, the DB Symmetry proposal and the A46 Expressway ? This is not a hypothetical question as of course these three latest proposals are under active consideration at a local and national level and as elected members we will be asked to give our opinions.

I am assuming that the traffic impact of the proposals now under active consideration at Magna Park have already been taken into account as it is difficult to envisage how any more northbound HGV traffic can be accommodated on the A5 approach to Dodwells.

Yours sincerely,

David Bill
County Councillor,
Hinckley

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ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
THURSDAY 1 MARCH 2018

MINUTE EXTRACT – MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport concerning proposals to revise the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Transport Policy and the Mainstream Home to School Transport Policy. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

A statement was received from Dr Eynon CC and from Annie Bannister, a parent of a child affected by the proposals. A copy of these statements is filed with these minutes.

Mrs Seaton, Mrs Taylor and Mr Sheahan, the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Labour Spokesperson on the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee attended by invitation for this item

In the ensuing discussion, the following points were raised:-

- i) The proposals related to discretionary transport provision for children with SEN or disabilities under the age of 5 years, for young people with SEN aged 16 to 18 and other young people aged 16+; the proposals would generate a saving of up to £800,000, against an initial savings target of £1million;
- ii) In response to the statement by Dr. Eynon CC tabled at the meeting, the Committee was informed that analysis of the consultation results had not been analysed by the Department but by the Business Intelligence Unit in the Chief Executive's Department. The analysis was consistent with industry norms and the results highlighted in the report were those that were deemed statistically significant for the relevant questions. It was acknowledged that the proposals were unpopular.
- iii) Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group had been consulted and had been particularly helpful in assisting the development of proposals to mitigate the impact on people;
- iv) Regarding Personal Transport Budgets (PTB), Members were informed that measures would be developed to help support families in moving to a new system. This would include, for example, working with schools to identify families who could share home to school transport, potentially arranged by the school and funded through each family's PTB. Mitigation measures would be put in place to help address potential drop-out rates;
- v) Exception arrangements would be put in place to address and support families for whom a PTB was unworkable. Exceptions would be

considered on a case by case basis by staff well experienced in dealing with PTBs as well as mainstream and SEN home to school transport. Criteria for an exception could not be set out as each case was individual. A two-stage appeals process would be in place; the first stage would be dealt with by staff who were well-versed in the area of work, although had not dealt with the case previously; and the second stage would be handled by an independent panel. The committee was informed that, should significant issues arise with the operation of the PTB, the system could be reviewed;

- vi) Mechanisms would be put in place to monitor use of PTBs to identify early on any issues being experienced by individual families. Payments would be made monthly in advance to help support families with budgeting;
- vii) Where a student was deemed likely of entering into care as a result of transport pressures which had led to poor attendance at school, a robust escalation process would be in place. This would be developed, in conjunction with schools and the SEN service, should the proposals be approved by the Cabinet at its meeting on 9 March 2018;
- viii) Members were informed that officers had worked closely with Children and Family Services to identify mitigation measures to minimise any potential effect on the social care budget, should children be unable to attend school due to financial pressures;
- ix) There were numerous hackney cabs available that were wheelchair accessible and availability was not considered an issue at this stage. The arrangements would be reviewed should issues arise;
- x) Where children had been provided with medical escorts, discussions would take place with parents and carers to understand the transport arrangements made when such children were not at school. The PTB would reflect the particular needs of the child;
- xi) 'Low income families' were defined as those who were in receipt of the maximum Working Families Tax Credit or eligible for free school meals;
- xii) Members also recognised that changes had been made to the proposals in response to the consultation findings; the consultation had been beneficial in understanding the impacts of those initial proposals.

The majority of members recognised that difficult decisions needed to be made in order to deliver services with reduced funding. A number of members commented that the proposals now presented would no doubt cause some difficulty for families but given the budgetary pressures on the Council and that these services were non-statutory, in the circumstances, they were the best that could be achieved and therefore supported the proposals.

Messrs Boulter, Hunt, Bill (and Mr Sheahan) were of the view that the proposals would impact adversely on some of the most vulnerable in society and as such asked that it be recorded that they were not in support of the proposals.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet be advised of the views now expressed by the Committee on the revised Special Educational Needs Transport Policy and the revised Mainstream Home to School Transport Policy.

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Cabinet – 9th March 2018

Mainstream and SEN Home to School Transport policy

Comments from the Liberal Democrat Group

The Liberal Democrat Group remains totally opposed to these reductions which will affect some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Leicestershire. We do not believe they are justified or necessary and once again the Cabinet has largely ignored the response to the consultation questions which in some cases drew an 80% rejection to the principle of reducing the current service.

The consultation responses set out very clearly the implications of pressing ahead with the reductions as currently proposed. Families are telling you that many of them will not be able to afford the additional costs to get their children to school or college that often involves long distances due to unsuitable provision in local mainstream schools which does not meet the special needs of their children. The Liberal Democrat Group does not believe the revised offer of a £330 / 50% discount for low income families goes far enough and will still lead to inequality.

We are completely opposed to the removal of traditional transport provided directly by the Council for all eligible children between 16 and 18. What is the response to families that are unable to transport their children to school due to work commitments or because they do not have access to a car?



With regard to the removal of mainstream post 16 transport this will discriminate against young people living in isolated rural areas. We are surprised that Conservative members, many of whom represent rural areas, are willing to support the complete withdrawal of home to school transport arranged by the Council. Furthermore the proposed annual travel grant of £150 for young people from a low income background is frankly derisory when set against the actual cost of travelling 10 - 15 miles a day to continue their education. This of course supposes that a commercial bus service exists which is why being able to access school transport arranged by the Council is so important for children and young people in rural areas.

Approving these reductions today marks a new low in the Council's response to austerity and the impact of Government cuts to local services on which so many people depend.

Simon Galton
Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

**SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 7 MARCH 2018****MIDLANDS CONNECT – SUB NATIONAL TRANSPORT BODY****MINUTE EXTRACT**

The Commission considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which would be submitted to the Cabinet on 9 March 2018 to advise of Midlands Connect's draft proposals to become a Sub-national Transport Body (STB) and to seek Cabinet's approval of the Authority's response to the proposals, with particular reference to the consultation on the proposed STB voting options and functions. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i) Members welcomed the proposal as it appeared to be the only way in which Leicestershire would get funding for sizeable and meaningful transport infrastructure. The Commission was advised that the County Council had secured £92 million for transport infrastructure in the last five years but that the STB would be better placed than individual local transport authorities to lobby and bid for future funding. It would also be a statutory consultee on transport matters and would therefore be a body that the Government was required to interact with.
- (ii) The Director confirmed that officers were comfortable with the proposal that no single authority would have a veto on decisions. Only elected members would have voting rights and it was expected that decisions would normally be made by consensus, either through compromise or agreeing an approach. When a vote was required, precautions such as a super majority were in place to safeguard the position of each local transport authority. In addition, if the governance arrangements were not working effectively, the Midlands Connect Partnership Board would be able to agree to change them. The Commission suggested that officers request further details on the definition of consensus in this context.
- (iii) The Commission supported the recommendation that the Council's preferred voting option was to have voting weighted on a population base of one vote for every 200,000 people, as this was felt to be as fair as possible. Members were also pleased to note that representatives on the Strategic Board were fairly balanced between the East and West Midlands.
- (iv) The recommendation to the Cabinet to seek further clarity about the Scrutiny Committee proposal was welcomed. The Commission suggested that Midlands Connect should be advised that for transparent and effective scrutiny, membership of the Scrutiny Committee should be drawn from the scrutiny bodies of Local Transport Authorities. Executive Members of Local Transport

Authorities should be excluded. It should also be possible for the Scrutiny Committee to co-opt members, for example from transport operators, other transport bodies or service users.

- (v) The Commission requested that formal arrangements for the STP to report back to its constituent bodies were developed. Currently, any decision required by Midlands Connect was the subject of a report to the Cabinet and relevant Scrutiny Committee. It was acknowledged that this arrangement would need revisiting and formalising in the light of the proposal for Midlands Connect to become an STB.
- (vi) The governance arrangements for the STB took Combined Authorities into account. If any new Combined Authorities were established in the Midlands Connect area, discussions would be held with Midlands Connect to determine how this would affect voting arrangements.
- (vii) It would be important to ensure that Leicestershire's transport priorities continued to be recognised by Midlands Connect. The Commission was pleased to note that a number of Leicestershire's priorities were included in the Midlands Connect Strategy and were therefore likely to be recognised by the Government. In addition the Council, through its membership of Transport for the East Midlands, was working to strengthen relationships across the East Midlands Local Transport Authorities and to establish an agreed position on transport priorities for the region. It was expected that this would enable East Midlands Transport Authorities to be more of an equal partner in Midlands Connect.
- (viii) It was noted that the priorities in the Midlands Connect Strategy were at different stages of development and that feasibility would be tested at each stage. It was not possible for Midlands Connect to give a definite statement of intent in relation to its priorities. With regard to the proposal to develop an A46 Expressway it was confirmed that this was a priority for the region because of its benefits in relation to connectivity, resilience, allowing growth and providing some relief to the Birmingham motorway network. To that end, a feasibility study was being undertaken. Members suggested that some evidence of confidence in the scheme's deliverability would be welcomed in due course.
- (ix) The rail priorities for Midlands Connect were high level and did not include the Ivanhoe Line. Similarly, Leicestershire County Council's rail priorities were the direct rail link from Leicester to Coventry and enhancements to the Leicester to Birmingham rail connections. The Ivanhoe Line was not a priority as the proposal faced a number of challenges, including the cost and lack of a link to Leicester Railway Station. Work however was ongoing to establish if Government's rail strategy launched in 2017 could provide any support to the development of the Ivanhoe Line proposals.

Mr Bill asked for his concern to be placed on record that, by including the A46 Expressway as a priority in the Midlands Connect Strategy, the County Council was

promoting a major project without knowing its impact on the local road network, countryside and the population of Leicestershire.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the comments now made be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 9 March 2018 and that the Cabinet's attention be drawn in particular to the view that that for transparent and effective scrutiny, membership of the Scrutiny Committee should be drawn from the scrutiny bodies of Local Transport Authorities;
- (b) That officers be requested to submit a further report on the Scrutiny arrangements to the Scrutiny Commission once the arrangements have been clarified.

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ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
6TH MARCH 2018

MINUTE EXTRACT - DRAFT LEICESTER, LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND
LIVING WELL WITH DEMENTIA STRATEGY 2019-2022

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities concerning the draft Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) Living Well with Dementia Strategy covering the period 2019-2022. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Members welcomed the development of the Strategy given the significant number of people now suffering from dementia. The Committee also noted that subject to the outcome of the consultation each individual organisation would be responsible for developing their own action and implementation plan which would sit alongside the LLR wide Strategy.

The Committee noted that the policy identified specifically those with early onset dementia. Members recognised that the cohort of people with early onset dementia was relatively small, that such people would not necessarily wish to access the dementia services now provided which were aimed primarily at those aged 65 and over and as such would welcome consideration being given in the emerging action/ implementation plans of how the Council and partners might assist this cohort.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet be advised that this Committee welcomes and supports the proposed Strategy but requests that consideration be given to how the needs of those people with early onset dementia might be met.

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ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**6TH MARCH 2018****MINUTE EXTRACT - STRATEGY FOR DELIVERY OF LIBRARY SERVICES IN
BRAUNSTONE TOWN**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities concerning the outcome of further community engagement regarding the proposed transfer of library services in Braunstone Town to community management. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 13' is filed with these minutes.

The Committee noted that the current lease arrangement with Braunstone Parish Council meant that the County Council had an on-going financial commitment of £17,000 irrespective of whether the library remained open.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet be advised that noting the on-going commitment regarding the lease the Committee supports Option 2 outlined in the report.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3, 10 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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