



Cabinet – 01st April 2014

**Comments from the Liberal Democrat Group
On Home to School Transport Policy**

We welcome the report's recommendations to re-consult on this issue.

The new proposals positively address some of our concerns over the previous ones, especially the affect on the transitions around 10-14 high schools and 14-18 upper schools. Some of the key concerns of parents and head teachers have been addressed by these new proposals.

However, some issues still remain.

Parents will still be expected to apply to their nearest school, even if it is over-subscribed and they don't fall into the school's catchment area. This will lead to uncertainty for the parents over which school their child will end up in, and will also lead primary school classmates being split up, as some are given the few spare places in the nearest school before it fills up.

This seems unnecessary when their catchment school *does* have places for them and would be able to accommodate the class in full.

We believe that this can be solved with a slight further amendment to the new proposals. If '*nearest Leicestershire school*' was replaced with '*nearest Leicestershire catchment school*':

- Schools generally don't have catchment areas containing more students than their capacity. If students are offered transport to their nearest *catchment* school, the problems described above due to over-subscription will be greatly reduced.
- If a parent found themselves in the catchment area of more than one school, they would only be offered transport to the nearest one. There would be no risk of "multiple eligibility" under this proposal.
- Should 'nearest Leicestershire school' be over-turned due to a successful challenge on the policy, 'nearest catchment school' would continue to ensure most Leicestershire students would continue to be offered transport to a Leicestershire school.

We urge the cabinet to move that an option with '*Nearest Leicestershire Catchment School*' be a part of the consultation, or at least the lead member be given the power to place it on the consultation, pending further investigation and advice from officers on the potential risks and consequences of this policy.



This report shows a positive move by the Council to listen to the concerns of parents and head teachers over the changes to Home to School Transport Policy. Allowing '*Nearest Leicestershire Catchment School*' to be consulted on would be a further positive step in addressing parent concerns.

We attach an email we sent to the lead member on Monday to make this request and hope for a positive response.

Comments by Simon Galton and Dr Sarah Hill on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group

Email sent to Peter Osborne from Simon Galton on Mon 31/03/2014 at 09:40

Dear Peter

Further to your announcement at the Scrutiny Commission last Wednesday and the urgent item to be considered by Cabinet tomorrow concerning the above, we have been thinking about the options the new consultation might include and discussing some ideas with officers.

Whilst we fully support the first part of the wording you provided to the Commission about appropriate age range transfer we think it may be possible to improve the second part by changing the proposal from nearest Leicestershire School to "Nearest Leicestershire Catchment School." We believe this would go a long way to addressing residual concerns about the planned changes to Home to school Transport and is something we would like to see considered as an additional option for the new consultation.

I recognise that the key issue is whether "Nearest Leicestershire Catchment School" could increase the risk of challenge compared to nearest Leicestershire School and I have asked officers to consider this before the Cabinet meeting.

I wanted you to be aware of this suggestion in advance of the meeting and subject to officer advice would ask Cabinet to consider including this as an additional option for the forthcoming consultation.

I am unable to make the meeting tomorrow and will be away for the rest of the week so would be grateful if you could let Sarah know your thoughts on this proposal.

Kind regards

Simon