

31 October 2013
Our Ref: **EEI/FC/TW**



**School Organisation & Planning
School Admissions**

County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND

Jim Leivers

Director for Children, Education &
Families

Parent/Carer
<Address1>
<Address2>
<Address3>
<Address4>
<Postcode>

Dear Parent/Carer

Home to School Transport Consultation - have your say

Oxfordshire County Council is running a new consultation on proposals to change its Home to School Transport Policy - following a decision in July to look again at the plans.

The current Home to School Transport Policy is more generous than the national 'statutory minimum' (what we must provide by law), which means the Council spends more than it is legally obliged to. In addition, charges for 'concessionary fares' on Home to School Transport (i.e. where spare seats on school buses are used by children who are not entitled to free transport) do not cover the full cost to the Council, which means they are subsidised by public funds.

Given the on-going pressure on public finances and the need for the Council to identify large savings across all service areas, this level of spending is not considered sustainable. We want a thriving Oxfordshire, and pledge to make savings as fairly as possible, while protecting services for those in greatest need.

Following extensive feedback during the summer, when the Council deferred its decision on potential changes to the Home to School Transport Policy, revised proposals to reduce the range of schools to which children would qualify for free transport are now being put forward for consultation. These proposals would bring the Council's policy into line with the national statutory level, as well as with similar policies adopted by neighbouring councils.

The Council is also consulting on options to raise concessionary fares on school buses and a proposal to remove references to Collaborative Learning Transport in its Home to School Transport Policy.

The proposed changes would not affect parents' or carers' rights to express preferences for any three schools, nor would they reduce the rights of low income families to receive free transport to any of the three nearest secondary schools between two and six miles. The general entitlement to free travel to the nearest school with an available place if it is over the statutory walking distance (three miles for those aged 8 to 16 and two miles for those of school age who are below the age of 8) would also remain unaffected.

Have your say

The Home to School Transport consultation will run from 4 November to 20 December 2013. The proposals, supporting information and online consultation form can be found on the Consultation Portal of Oxfordshire's public website.

Please read the proposal and respond to the consultation online at:
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consultation

There will be a series of public meetings to support this consultation. All meetings will start at 7.00 pm and are scheduled to finish by 8.30 pm:

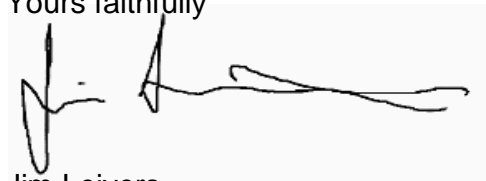
- Monday, 11 November 2013 Carterton Community College, Carterton
- Thursday, 14 November 2013 Matthew Arnold School, Cumnor
- Friday, 22 November 2013 Bartholomew School, Eynsham
- Friday, 29 November 2013 The Marlborough CE School, Woodstock
- Monday, 2 December 2013 Icknield Community College, Watlington
- Wednesday, 4 December 2013 Wheatley Park School, Holton
- Tuesday, 10 December 2013 Larkmead School, Abingdon-on-Thames
- Thursday, 12 December 2013 The Warriner School, Bloxham

No decisions have yet been taken about the proposals. After the consultation has closed, a report will be written and discussed by Cabinet on Tuesday, 28 January 2014.

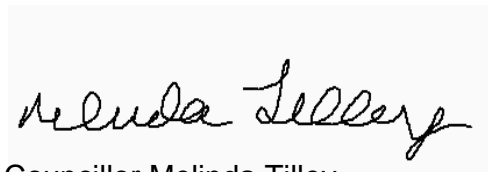
Any agreed changes to entitlement to free transport would apply from September 2015 onwards. The consultation includes separate options for the phasing-in of any changes. Changes to the Concessionary Fare Scheme, if agreed, would be implemented from September 2014.

We look forward to receiving your response to this important consultation.

Yours faithfully



Jim Leivers
Director for Children, Education & Families



Councillor Melinda Tilley
Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Families

Contact Number: 01865 815175

Email: transport.consultation@oxfordshire.gov.uk (comments)
 admissions.schools@oxfordshire.gov.uk (questions)

Web: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consultation