

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**13 September 2011**

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**Public Participation  
Item No. 6 - Denominational Home to School Transport**

**Statement from Colette and Dave Williams**

We are very concerned with regards to the council's decision to cease funding for denominational transport. This will have a huge impact on my family. As practising Catholics we have sent our eldest son to St Gregory's Catholic College in Bath as this is the Catholic school in our catchment area. We obviously have to pay a subsidy for the transport which the council have to date provided. However it concerns us that the council will no longer fund this as of September 2012 and with another child going to St Gregory's in the next few years this will have a huge impact on our family. As we live in a "Christian" country it is a great shame that councils are no longer able to provide this subsidy for travel to denominational schools. Equality and Diversity is such an important aspect of education - surely we should have transport provided to accommodate the learners' needs? We go to great lengths within our schools to do this - surely transport should be a factor also. Many students throughout the county have taxis provided to get them to school and college - will this cease as of September 2012 also?

We belong to the parish of St Mary's in Chippenham and it is our understanding that there was an agreement in the 1960's between the parish and the county council with regards to providing transport for Catholic students wishing to attend a Catholic School. There were enough Catholic students in Chippenham and the surrounding villages to warrant building a Catholic secondary school in Chippenham, however the council decided not to build but gave a guarantee that transport would continue to be provided for these students who wished to attend a Catholic secondary school. In later years another secondary school - Abbeyfield was built which still does not accommodate the needs of practising Catholics who wish to send their children to a Catholic school.

We hope therefore that the council will change its mind with regards to denominational transport subsidies. We can appreciate that the council has to make savings, however it would be a great shame if the council no longer saw the need to support families who wish to send their children to specific schools due to their religious beliefs. This is surely not looking after their equality and diversity needs.

Regards

Colette and Dave Williams