

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

14 June 2011

Public Participation

From Father Jean-Patrice Coulon – Denominational Home to School Transport

Question

I would like to request that the Cabinet consider alternative arrangements for deciding the school transport proposal on 26th July. It has come to my attention that several parents, including the head teacher of St Augustine's Catholic College will not be able to attend, as this date falls in the first week of the school holidays, and they have family holidays which they have booked months in advance. In the interests of "Local, open, honest discussion", I would ask that the meeting is either deferred to September, or that there is a meeting beforehand, with representatives of the Council meeting representatives of the parents.

Such a meeting was arranged in 2007 when this was discussed, and the sports hall was filled with parents. This would suggest to me that the venue of Bradley Road for the Cabinet meeting would not be big enough, and so this "Pre-meeting" would be a case of best practice and would demonstrate the Council's intention to listen to tax payers.

Response

Should the decision be deferred to the September Cabinet meeting?

The decision is being sought at the July meeting because of the Council's wish to give adequate opportunity for parents and schools to respond to the proposals before the decision is made, and adequate notice after the decision is taken (if the proposals were approved) for them to make alternative arrangements. If the decision were deferred to September, this would give less time for the schools to make alternative transport arrangements and to publicise these to parents (if the proposals were approved). Parents of children at the schools would want to know whether transport will be available from their area, and at what cost, the same is true for parents of prospective children for the schools (the last date for applications for school places in September 2012 will be in the third week of October 2011, and decisions about admissions would be in March 2012).

It is considered that adequate opportunities have been given for those affected to make their views known. The follow up letter gave full information on how individuals can make representations, both in writing or by attending the cabinet meeting. It is appreciated that some parents or school staff may find it difficult to attend but this will be true of any date, but those who are unable to attend the meeting for whatever reason can submit written comments which will be incorporated into a summary of responses within the Cabinet report, or could ask someone else to represent them at the meeting.

Should there be a meeting beforehand, with representatives of the Council meeting representatives of the parents?

Given that there are adequate opportunities for those affected to make their views known it is considered that there would be no benefit from holding a public meeting in addition to the Cabinet meeting itself. I can confirm that I am meeting with the Head of Education of the Diocese and the Leader of the Council on Thursday 16th June to discuss this matter.