

## Appendix C

### Consultation Process and Outcomes

Central Bedfordshire Council has consulted widely on the proposed changes to the Home to School Transport Policy.

The Consultation period began on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2010 and concluded on the 19<sup>th</sup> February 2010. The original consultation period was extended by one week beyond the statutory minimum to allow further time for the diocesan authorities to respond, and to provide additional time for members of the public to give their views. The statutory period for consultation was therefore met in line with the DfES Guidance.<sup>1</sup>

A Communication Plan was agreed with the Council's Corporate Communications Team, to include dissemination of the consultation and questionnaire, and press and radio coverage.

The Consultation guidance and Questionnaire were available through the following options:

- Council website and online submission;
- Paper copies available from Council Contact Team and School Transport Team;
- All Central Bedfordshire schools received information and were asked to inform parents of the Consultation. Schools could have copies of the consultation to send to parents, and these were sent to all school that requested them.

The Council was aware that the proposals would potentially affect some parents and children very directly. To ensure that these families were aware of the consultation, individual letters were sent to all families with children in denominational schools and to all families with children with Statements of Special Educational Need.

Representatives from the Diocese of St Albans and a representative from the Catholic Diocese of Northampton were consulted at a meeting with the Local Authority on 26 January 2010. A written submission was received from both representatives and their views were also put to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 2 February 2010.

Directors of Children's Services in neighbouring authorities were informed of the proposals and of the number of Central Bedfordshire children currently receiving education in denominational schools in their authority.

Central Bedfordshire members of Parliament were informed of the proposals.

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<sup>1</sup> Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance 2007. DfES. "Consultation should last at least 28 working days."

There were 313 responses to the questionnaire. The spreadsheet shows the results by question. All of the proposals were supported by those responding with the exception of Proposal 2: The Council proposes to end the provision of transport to denominational schools with effect from 1 September 2010. 39% of respondents agreed with the proposal and 61% disagreed.

Of these respondents:

- 49% of parents with a child at a mainstream school agreed with Proposal 2;
- 46% of parents with a child at a special school agreed with Proposal 2;
- 74% of employees or governors of a mainstream school agreed with Proposal 2; and
- 67% (2 responses) of employees or governors of a special school agreed with Proposal 2.

90% of Parents with a child at a denominational school disagreed with Proposal 2, as did 100% (8 responses) of employees or governors of a denominational school.

Strong representations were made by those currently receiving free transport to denominational schools to retain it or to phase out the entitlement.

Following problems with the Council's IT systems, a final check for lost emails will be carried out, together with a full analysis of all comments and letters received as part of the consultation. Updated information will be provided to the Executive once officers are satisfied that all responses submitted have been logged and analysed.