

## **Cabinet 5th December – Cllr Nick Ireland**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this paper.

I fully support the statements from the public that we have already heard and also the comments from Cllr Jefferies. In addition, several of my Liberal Democrat colleagues have expressed concern as to the outcomes if this proposal is supported by Cabinet.

The headline savings span a range from £0.46m to just over £1m. However, the report contains absolutely no evidence to back this up.

The closest we come to any concrete number in the text is that of 'approx. 800' on page 5.

Having checked with the author, this represents the total number of children currently transported by DCC under the SEND policy.

It IS NOT the number of children this proposal will impact; that total is not mentioned even once, yet it is the primary determinant as to the possible savings achievable.

The proposed savings are broken down into three areas.

The first is, and I quote, "marginally reduced" mileage costs of £100k.

These savings are however perfectly well able to be calculated accurately as DCC knows where the affected children live, and therefore how far they are from the appropriate pick-up point. It's a spreadsheet job at worst and indeed, this information is also necessary in order to carry out the proposed risk assessments; incidentally, the method and resource requirements of how these are to be achieved is also notably absent.

Secondly, a saving of between £200k and £400k is "estimated" from new applications for transport having a behaviour change. This is based on an increase in families taking personal travel budgets from 38% to 60%, yet absolutely no evidence is provided to support this conclusion

Finally, the biggest savings are based on between 5% and 20% of the families of the FULL 800 children currently transported moving to PTBs. As I've already highlighted, the actual, unknown to us, number is somewhat less than 800. Again, no rationale or evidence is provided to back up this claim.

When I read a paper which contains phrases, many repeated, such as "difficult to accurately predict", "anticipated", "expectation", "difficult to precisely quantify", "no evidence", "expected", "estimated" etc. that sets alarm bells ringing. Setting aside the unsubstantiated savings, the impact on vulnerable children will be evidently high, the resource requirements are not stated, either on staff or the Child and Adult Services appeals panel, and the reputational damage to Dorset County Council is potentially huge.

Indeed, one must question the haste in which this report is being brought forward, when pretty much everything else before this Cabinet is being kicked out into the long grass for the new Unitary to deal with. Perhaps the hope is to slip this into DCC's coffin just before the lid is nailed down and we're buried into history.

As the Dorset Parent Care Council has highlighted in its letter to Cabinet, consultation is meaningless if the policy is to be adopted from January 2019.

It's tempting to describe this paper as a back of a fag packet calculation, but it isn't even that good. It's bumf, in every sense of the word.

My suggestion, if I may be so bold, is that this paper is withdrawn, reworked by taking out the unknowns and the guesses based on them, and the actual known numbers inserted with realistic, evidential calculations and conclusions derived thereof: then, and only then, put it in front of Dorset Council's newly appointed Child Services Executive Director for them to decide if this is really worth pursuing.