

Shadow Executive Committee

12 November 2018 - Public Participation

Question from Tristram Hobson, Headteacher of The Swanage School to the Dorset County Council Cabinet Member for Economy, Education, Learning and Skills in relation to home to School Transport Policies 2019-2020

Question

It is apparent from paragraphs 5.4 to 5.10 that officers have not taken into consideration the points made in consultation responses making the consultation process itself flawed.

- As a mainstream secondary, The Swanage School does have sufficient capacity for all children from Swanage and the surrounding area.
- As it stands the transport policy is and will continue to waste £134,000 of taxpayers' money each year.

In the current economic climate how can the Council justify such an unnecessary waste of taxpayers' money?

Answer

My thanks to Mr Hobson for his question and may I also take this opportunity to say thank you for the warm welcome I received when I visit The Swanage School recently.

The Shadow Executive Committee, should be aware that within our home to school transport policy set out today, there is a provision under Section 4 relating to Swanage School, permitting pupils residing within the catchment area of The Swanage School, to also seek a place at Purbeck School as their preferential choice and to be permitted transport to the school.

The Swanage School operates as a Free School and regarding the objections they have lodged, Dorset County Council has sort independent advice to ascertain our policy is legal both historically and for the foreseeable future.

Madam Chairman, with your permission, I would like to take today's meeting of the Shadow Executive Committee as an opportunity to reach out to the community that is served by The Swanage School and urged those who have yet to evaluate the school's suitability for their child's education to do so.

The school offers excellent modern and comprehensive facilities, lead by a team of professionals with the very best of forward thinking in providing education. On the evidence I was shown during my visit, including conversations I personally had with pupils, when they told me they found their teachers inspiring, it should not come as a surprise that Ofsted rated the Swanage School - Good.

I hope in answering Mr Hobson's question, members will agree with me, that a parental lead choice, which would see greater numbers of pupils resident in the Swanage catchment area switching to The Swanage school which is geographically closer to their home, has the potential to produce a better outcome for pupils, whilst reducing resource pressure on the new Council, rather than a forced policy change which could at this time, be undermined via an appeals process.

I would like to continue to work on a solution that is acceptable to both The Swanage School and the new Dorset Council.