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THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

COUNCIL – 24 JANUARY 2007

JOINT REPORT BY THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING POLICY, HOUSING POLICY AND TRANSPORTATION AND THE CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND LIBRARIES

RESPONSE TO PETITION REQUESTING SCHOOL BUS SERVICE

This report provides information to Members in response to the petition presented to the Council meeting on 6 December requesting school bus service.

FOR INFORMATION

1 Background

- 1.1 At the Council meeting on the 6 December 2006, Councillor Hoier presented a petition of 141 signatures requesting the provision of school bus service. The prayer of the petition said:-

"We, the undersigned residents and children living in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea are yet again suffering undue stress and anxiety due to a lack of secondary schools locally. Our children are expected to travel long hours every day to a secondary school outside the Borough which eventually affects their health, safety and education as well as the added travel cost to the household budget. We therefore call upon Kensington and Chelsea Council to include in its schools' travel plan a school bus service which will provide a safe and reliable transport system for all its Borough pupils."

2. Response to the petition

- 2.1 The Road Safety and School Travel Team support schools in developing travel plans, which address road safety and travel issues that are particular to every school. School Travel Plans therefore reflect schools' individual needs and ways to deal with them as well as encouraging pupils, members of staff and parents to use sustainable modes of transport.

- 2.2 In addition, as School Travel Plans are school-based, the Road Safety and School Travel Team do not have a single "schools' travel plan" as such or is responsible for the provision of school bus service.
- 2.3 We understand that, depending on circumstances, travelling to school can sometimes be stressful. The Road Safety and School Travel Team would strongly advise the parents to encourage the secondary school at the corresponding borough to have an active travel plan in place in order to address the issue. In addition, the London Mayor's Transport Strategy, published in 2001, set out the target that all schools in London should have a travel plan in place by 2009.
- 2.4 In relation to "added travel cost to the household budget", we would like to remind the parents that the Mayor of London Ken Livingstone launched free bus and tram travel for all under-16 year olds in London. According to the London Mayor "[This concession] encourages young people to use public transport, helping to continue London's move away from car journeys and cutting pollution and congestion ... It is also intended to help hundreds of thousands of families across London by improving young people's access to education, sport and leisure".
- 2.5 It is regrettable that many secondary age children who live in the Royal Borough are obliged to seek school places in other local authority areas. Nonetheless, it is not clear that the provision of school buses would be a practicable or appropriate solution to their difficulties. The School Transport Bill which would have given local authorities the power to provide school bus services had not been enacted by the time of the last General Election and has not been revived by the Government.
- 2.6 The majority of pupils who attend out-borough schools go to establishments which are close to the borough boundaries and which have reasonable public transport links. For some pupils, schools such as Burlington Danes and the Paddington Academy are within walking distance. Not all the pupils who travel further afield have difficult journeys, though some may be time-consuming. Bus travel is now free for pupils in this age group. If further routes are desired that is a matter for Transport for London. Even if the power was available to us, it would be impracticable to provide a school bus service to all the many schools which our residents attend and would of course add to the congestion on the roads which already slows journeys down.

- 2.7 Any parent who considers their child is at risk because of their journey to school should contact the Admissions Team who will discuss their concerns with them and offer advice.
- 2.8 In the longer term, the opening of the Chelsea Academy will provide many Borough pupils with a school which will be more easily accessible to pupils than some of the present alternatives.
- 2.9 It should be noted that school travel plans are the responsibility of individual schools, not of the Royal Borough, though officers will of course be prepared to offer schools help and advice in preparing one if needed.

FOR INFORMATION

**Councillor Daniel Moylan
Cabinet Member for Planning Policy, Housing Policy and
Transportation**

**Councillor James Husband
Cabinet Member for Education and Libraries**