

**Statement for Edlesborough Parish Council by Cllr David Martin,
Buckinghamshire Council Cabinet Member, Logistics**

Home to school transport arrangements

On Monday 7 September 2020 Cllr Anne Wight notified me that a parent had concerns about overcrowding on the bus route 856 to Cottesloe School. Overcrowding on a school bus is a serious concern and immediate action was taken with the bus operator, Marshalls to resolve it.

An additional bus (the 859) was commissioned to pick up students at Edlesborough, with effect from the following morning of 08 September.

The website timetable has been updated to include the additional stop for the 859; and all 14 parents affected have been sent a notification confirming the changed arrangements for their children. The boarding point is the same and timetable has been confirmed.

The reason for the initial excess passes issued for the 856 was an error made by an officer. This should not of course have happened, parents have to understand that during the first few days of returning to school following a six months break by everyone, changes of transport providers, thousands of children to process including hundreds of new SEND children, every one of whom constitutes their own unique case, staff working from home, new staff not being able to be trained on a one to one basis, etc, etc, travel arrangements from day one in all cases cannot possibly be totally seamless. There will of course be issues; and as these happen, we will make new arrangements to deal with them - as we have done here.

As cabinet member I apologise for these events. I understand completely that issues affecting school transport provision is the last thing parents need in today's climate of uncertainty. However, we did take immediate action on the day we knew of the issue to rectify the situation and ensure the safety of students. I regret this situation arose and for any anxiety this has caused all students and parents affected.

Since this action has been taken, I am pleased to say there have been no further reported concerns of any overcrowding on either bus route. I can also confirm that there have been no reported incidents of any overcrowding on any of the other 130 bus routes commissioned directly by the Council or operated by commercial operators. All school transport providers are in daily contact with the Transport Services Team to ensure the service works effectively. The senior officer team and I review the situation daily; and seek to rectify any issues immediately they arise.

Please be assured that the safety of our children is of paramount concern to the Council and officers. Extensive preparations and adaptations have been made to ensure school transport is as safe as possible, including all vehicles being deep cleaned between school runs.

Further details on school transport and safety measures can be found on the Council's website:

<https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/education/school-transport/school-transport-information-for-parents-and-carers/>

When we have resolved all outstanding school transport issues for the start of term I will be conducting a review of all processes leading up to the commencement of the Winter term and I would welcome comments from Edlesborough parents to help inform any changes we will make to existing arrangements. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Parish Council and parents, listen to their concerns and discuss how things may be done differently in the future.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute if I may to all parents affected who have contacted Council officers, Cllr Anne Wight, other councillors and myself. What has happened has certainly caused anxiety for parents and doubtless a certain justifiable anger, all of which I understand completely as I would have felt the same. I appreciate and thank all parents for the tenor of their communications with our officers, which have been moderate and reasonable throughout, and to my mind very commendable in the circumstances. We got this one wrong; we have put it right as quickly and effectively as we could; and we are doing our best to ensure it will not happen again.

Cllr David Martin
Cabinet Member, Logistics
Buckinghamshire Council

14 September 2020