

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 41

Subject: Petition for Debate

Date of meeting: 19 October 2023

Report of: Executive Director for Governance, People & Resources

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Ward(s) affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Under the Council's Petition Scheme if a petition contains more than 1,250 signatures and is not petition requesting officer evidence, it will be debated by the Full Council.
- 1.2 The e-petition has resulted in triggering a debate at the council meeting, having exceeded the threshold with a total of 1289 signatures confirmed at the time of printing the report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the petition is noted and referred to the Transport & Sustainability Committee for consideration.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION / CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 **The Petition:** Make school bus travel for kids free in Brighton

Lead petitioner: Tina Phillips

Due to locations of high schools in the city and the fact that not everyone gets the closest school assigned to them, a lot of (secondary age) children travel to school by bus.

The Council claims that "most children in Brighton & Hove live within walking distance of the school" and hence won't be able to get free transport. But the truth is that the schools locations make it hard for kids to walk to (in a lot of cases the walk takes up to an hour, sometimes more), the cycle lanes on roads leading to the schools are almost non-existent (and the city is hilly) and the British weather often leaves children with no choice but to cram on the bus for which they are forced to pay. Some families will drive instead - this of course is a poor solution for environmental reasons and clogs up already busy roads.

So, public transport is a sensible solution, if one can afford it. But at £40+ / month per child the cost is anything but affordable for many. And ultimately, it is wrong that anyone has to pay for the travel so their child can receive the education they are entitled to.

There's an existent provision for free travel but only for those more than 3 miles away from the "appropriate school, which is the closest primary or junior school to the main home address that had an available place or the catchment area secondary school". In a lot of cases, the school assigned isn't the closest or preferred school, meaning that the child has indeed been forced to travel, yet has to pay for it.

The cost of travel is unsustainable for many families, and we ask Brighton and Hove City Council to reconsider the existing provision, looking at ways to make the school travel free for ALL children, following example of London where all bus travel for under 16s is free of charge (or, if fully free travel isn't financially feasible, this could be limited to weekday travel and term time / peak times only, ensuring school bound kids travel free of charge).

Either way, charging families for kids forced to travel to school is unacceptable and needs to change.

4. PROCEDURE:

4.1 The petition will be debated at the Council meeting in accordance with the agreed protocol:

- (i) The Lead petitioner will be invited by the Mayor to present the petition and will have up to 3 minutes in which to outline the petition and confirm the number of signatures;
- (ii) The Mayor will then open the matter up for debate by councillors for period of 15 minutes and will first call on the relevant Committee Chair to respond to the petition and move a proposed response. The Mayor will then call on those councillors who have indicated a desire to speak in the matter, before calling on the relevant Committee Chair to respond to the debate;
- (iii) An amendment to the recommendation in paragraph 2.1 of the report or to add additional recommendations should be submitted by 10.00am on the day of the meeting; otherwise it will be subject to the Mayor's discretion as to being appropriate. Any such amendment will need to be formally moved and seconded at the meeting;
- (iv) After the 15 minutes set aside for the debate, the Mayor will then formally put:
- (v) (a) Any amendments in the order in which they are moved, and
(b) The substantive recommendation(s) as amended (if amended).