

## Item 4: Petition

Petition from Amy Caldwell: [Review the current school transport provision from Great Gransden to Comberton Village College](#)

Petition closed on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023 with 159 signatures.

Text of petition:

**‘Petition for the County Council to formally review the current school transport provision from Great Gransden to Comberton Village College.**

The parents/carers of the children from the village of Great Gransden who attend Comberton Village College are calling on Cambridgeshire County Council to urgently review the current school transport provision for the purposes of ensuring consistency and transparency of decision-making, reducing inequality and unfair financial pressure on our families and consider the unnecessary environmental impact.

**Background Information**

- The existing position is that children from Great Gransden are not provided with free transport to Comberton Village College (a distance of 9.2 miles) despite it being a requirement for the Local Authority to provide it\*
- This means that the parents/carers of the children attending Comberton Village College are required to fund this provision themselves (in addition to their Council Tax contributions), which is fundamentally unfair and places additional financial pressure on local families, some of whom are already struggling financially.
- The cost for transport is currently £300 per child, per term (with the potential for an additional 7% increase), which seems excessive and does not appear to represent value for money. In addition, it is unclear how these costs (and any potential increases) have been determined and what, if any, negotiations have taken place with the bus operator.
- Although Great Gransden is considered by the Local Authority to be within the ‘catchment area’ for Longsands Academy (a distance of 7.4 miles), the reality is that no children from the village of Great Gransden currently attend that school. Indeed, very few children have attended in the past either, with many children from the village attending St Bede’s in Cambridge until 2013/14.
- It is our understanding that during 2013/14 an agreement was made for Comberton Village College to accept the children of Great Gransden and surrounding villages (within the catchment to Barnabas Oley Primary School) and become a ‘feeder’ school to Comberton Village College. References of this agreed status are made on documentation from both these primary and

secondary schools and it is clear that Governors from both Barnabas Oley Primary and Comberton Village College consider the primary school to be a 'feeder' school within the 'catchment area' of the secondary school.

- Data collected about the cohort of 21 children from 2021/22 Barnabas Oley Primary School's year 6 leavers identifies that the Local Authority is not providing any free transport to any Barnabas Oley Children, with:
  - 75% (16 children) attending Comberton Village College
  - 0% (0 children) attending Longsands Academy
  - 5% (1 child) attending an Independent School
  - 10% (2 children) attending Cambourne Village College
  - 5% (1 child) attending Melbourn Village College \*\*
  - 5% (1 child) attending a SEN school \*\*

### **Impact of Local Authority's decision-making**

- The decision taken by the Local Authority not to fund the bus service from Great Gransden to Comberton Village College is unequitable, and ultimately places an unfair financial pressure on families from this village (which is multiplied for those families with more than one child).
- Some families in Great Gransden are simply unable to find the money for the bus and have resorted to changing work patterns and upgrading cars so they can take their children to and from school themselves. More families are considering taking their children to and from school themselves and in the event of a further costs increase, there will very likely be more families who are unable to pay the bus fare.
- The Local Authority's decision-making around 'catchment areas and the free bus provision is not transparent and does not appear to be consistent. For example, it is unclear why the catchment area for Comberton Village College was extended to include children from the village of Gamlingay (a distance of 11.2 miles) when there are 4 other secondary schools that are significantly closer in distance \*\*\*
- Furthermore, it is unclear why the Local Authority's does not provide free school transport for children from Great Gransden, yet does provide it for children from Gamlingay. The Local Authority's decision-making is inconsistent and without any logic or transparency.
- The Local Authority must also have a duty to consider the environmental impact of their decision not to provide free school transport for Great Gransden children. Multiple vehicles taking the same daily journey to and from Comberton, will undoubtedly be contributing unnecessarily to increased carbon emissions and congestion on our roads.

\*[www.gov.uk/free-school-transport](http://www.gov.uk/free-school-transport)

\*\* Children who attended Barnabas Oley Primary School but who are outside of its Catchment area

\*\*\* Sandy Secondary School – 4.9 miles, Stratton Upper School 5.5 miles, Cambourne 6.2 miles, Bassingbourn Village College 7.3 miles