

Item 15xiv - Question Time

To the Leader of the Council

“The Council’s decision to withdraw funding for students wishing to attend Thurso High School in 2018 was met with opposition from the local community and representations from the Bower Community Council as this reversed long standing commitments.

It has been repeatedly cited by families that the decision was made contrary to Scottish Government guidance that states that “someone affected by the decision can have a legitimate expectation that because the policy or procedure has been operated in such a way in the past, that this will continue in the future”.

Given the Highland Council and its immediate and past predecessors, extending over the last half-century, have maintained a policy of local choice for children to attend Thurso High School, it is understandable that there is substantive and legitimate expectation from the local community.

Promises made to the Community Council that fees for school transport would be withdrawn at public meetings have failed to materialise. Instead, the Council has moved from a position of flexibility and openness to find a solution to an enforcement body, with parents threatened with court or debt collection for failure to pay the c.£410 per pupil cost.

Given that the Council must provide transport, if only to facilitate the transport of one pupil, and that Thurso, unlike Wick High School, currently experiences capacity number issues, will you agree to reviewing the decision currently enforced by the Council and make a commitment that the principles of localism will apply to the students and parents of Bower and the surrounding parish as it has done for the previous 50 years?”

Response to Mr S Mackie

I understand that current council policy regarding School Transport is being followed. If a change to policy is being sought, this would require a report to the Education Committee for their consideration.