



Neuadd y Sir / County Hall, Llandrindod, Powys, LD1 5LG

QUESTIONS AT ANY TIME TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Response by the Cabinet Member:

For ease of reference, I have repeated your questions:

Q1. The council appear to have discontinued the option for parents to buy vacant seats on school buses if their child is not eligible for free transport, and this is resulting in parents now driving children to school along the same route that a school bus is travelling.

Response:

The current policy allows vacant seats to be purchased where the student is under the qualifying distance to their nearest/catchment school. If we are to expand the policy to encourage greater use of the scheme, we would need to amend the policy where they could buy a seat to any school as long as there are no additional costs to the Council such as for diverting bus routes to collect non-qualifying learners making use of a vacant seat.

The policy position is not helped by the law which currently prevents us from 'selling' spare seats on school buses unless they meet PSVAR regulations (wheelchair accessible) unless an operator applies for an exemption which is granted based on an operator being able to demonstrate that they are moving towards 100% compliance with PSVAR which is why we only offer them to existing users. All exemptions are due to expire in 2026.

Q2. In the calculation our carbon account, are the emissions from private cars taking children to school included in the carbon budget? Without this there is a perverse incentive for us to encourage parents to take children to school by private car rather than make more use of the buses we run?

Response:

The answer to this question is not easy to respond to as our Carbon Accounts are designed to measure emissions from our own vehicles and services that we are directly in control of. However, it is an interesting dilemma for a local authority especially for Powys which is so rural and most students are taken to schools in a vehicle of some kind. Decisions are made on a daily basis about how people travel but those decisions are not predicated, for most, on the carbon emissions for that journey. We do have a responsibility to address this in the future but right now we cannot give you a meaningful response.

Q3. What is the effect on our carbon budget and of the overall carbon emission from school transport of our decision to discontinue the vacant seat scheme?

Response:

With regards to commuting emissions estimates, this year we have had to make several assumptions based on benchmarks provided by Welsh Government, such as

on average XX% of people in Wales commute by car and XX% by bus, in addition to an average commuting distance for Council Staff estimated prior to New Ways of Working. This is similar to other Local Authority approaches, but we do plan to incorporate more accurate information from resident surveys in future returns.