

F.A.O Mr Richard Thomas concerning The Joint Children & Environment School Transport Service Scrutiny panel meeting on 22.2.07 at 5.30pm, copies to Cllr Alan Mosley, Cllr Peter Phillips, Amanda Holyoaks and Anne Cousins.

Thank you for your invitation, via Worthen Primary School for us to attend the School Transport Service Scrutiny Meeting.

It is the intention of Mr Peter Ryan of 4 Millstream Bank, Worthen, Nr Shrewsbury, Shropshire

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and Mr & Mrs Graham and Sue Williams of Brookside Cottage, Worthen, Nr Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY5 9HW tel: 01743 891831 e-mail: graham\_williams@tinyonline.co.uk to attend the Shropshire County Council Scrutiny meeting on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2007 to make a statement about our views on the S.C.C school transport service.

Our original question was about the **Worthen / Brockton school bus** registration number BGR683W to The Mary Webb School, Pontesbury; route number PO1075, which is 26 years old, has no fitted seat belts and seats which posed a possible hazard to unrestrained children in the event of an accident.

Since the beginning of this term the Worthen bus in question has been replaced by a coach which although fairly old has better designed seats and fitted lapbelts, which is a step in the right direction. However, we have been informed that the old bus is still in operation and has been swapped to another route thus transferring the risk to another group of children.

Councillor Everall in answer to our original question said that 130 of the 150 School buses sourced were coaches fitted with seat belts and only 20 are buses without seat belts. We feel that this is discriminating against the children travelling on buses without fitted seatbelts, who are receiving a sub-standard service, potentially putting their health and safety at a greater risk in the event of an accident.

We feel that all 150 School transport services should be coaches or mini-buses with fitted seat belts. In fact the ideal S.C.C policy would be if **only coaches fitted with three-point seatbelts** were deployed, and that there were **adult monitors travelling on them** to ensure all children wore the belts and behaved sensibly.

The adult monitors are needed for the entire journey, as we have been informed that not many children actually wear the seatbelts. The main reason appears to be peer pressure, although our child does wear theirs, except for when the lapbelt did not work – of which there are several on this particular coach.

It is imperative that all the children wear belts as government safety adverts show that unbelted people become lethal projectiles in an accident as they are thrown forward with such force that they can kill the people in front of them.

If monitors are not possible then the next best alternative is that the bus driver should tell the children at the start of every homeward journey and when they get on individually in the morning to put their seatbelt on.

Three point seatbelts are needed because in the event of an accident a lapbelt may stop children flying forward or falling, but will not prevent serious injuries such as whiplash.

CCTV is another possibility which would record bad behaviour and may help to observe the wearing of seat belts.

Schools should also take some responsibility for the safety of their pupils while travelling to and from school and take a much stronger line in enforcing the wearing of fitted seatbelts, imposing detentions etc for children seen not wearing seatbelts and continually remind children in assembly's and through literature, posters etc that it is the law for children age 14 years and older to wear a fitted seatbelt and of the potentially fatal consequences of not wearing them.

Councillor Everall said in his answer to our question on 8<sup>th</sup> Dec 06 that in more than 20 years the council is not aware of any injury being caused on school buses through the absence of wearing seatbelts. We would dispute this comment, as we know that even since September 2006 some minor injuries have occurred on the Worthen bus, due to the absence of wearing seatbelts. It is more the fact that these are not reported to the S.C.C.

Since our last meeting with the council two coach crashes have hit the national headlines, one involving local children on a skiing trip, where a local teacher was seriously injured by being thrown through the windscreen, the other a national express coach which rolled over resulting in fatalities, further highlighting the need for fitted seatbelts to be worn.

So to clarify our question is will the S.C.C change their policy so that **only coaches fitted with three-point seatbelts** are contracted for school transport, especially in rural areas and ideally that there are **adult monitors travelling on them** to ensure all children wear the belts and behave sensibly or at least ensure schools enforce the wearing of seatbelts?

Yours sincerely,

Mr Graham Williams & Mrs Sue Williams