

## Councillors

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you this afternoon. My name is Philip Rogers and I am Chair of the Catholic Transport Action Group which is a parents' organisation established in response to the July 2006 decision by Council Executive to change its existing policy, and to charge for transport to Catholic schools.

I am here today representing aggrieved parents and the local Catholic community.

It is our belief that Bath & North East Somerset Council policy is now *fundamentally wrong* with regard to this issue of charging for school transport. This policy goes against Human Rights, and will have the effect of eroding the right of families to have their children attend their appropriate school, which in our case is the local Catholic school, often some miles from home and requiring the provision of home-to-school transport.

This policy will hit parents hard, with very considerable fees liable over the whole school education period of ages 5-16. While I recognise that there is some protection for the very poorest families, it is those parents on low incomes, but not in receipt of benefit who will be the hardest hit. This is not fair.

Parents in the Wansdyke wards represented by some of you sitting here today will be hit hard. St Gregory's Catholic College and St John's Primary School are the appropriate schools for many of our children and we will often have no other choice when considering transport.

As you will know from previous Council meetings, there is considerable support from the local Catholic community to have the decision of the previous Council Executive reversed. This is further demonstrated today by the weight of around 1000 signatures on this petition from our community to ask this new Council Cabinet to respond to our case. I ask Councillor Watt, as Cabinet Member for Childrens' Services to respond to reverse the policy decision to charge for transport to denominational schools; and to work with local Catholic schools and the Diocese of Clifton to find a better way of organising efficient and cost-effective home to school transport without charge to those parents I represent today.