

Danesborough Snippets for Little Brickhill in April 2023

Cllr David Hopkins / Cllr Victoria Hopkins / Cllr Alice Jenkins

Special bulletin



Home to School Transport – Update from MKCC Senior Office

Dear Cllr Hopkins

Alongside our discussions and further to your enquiries regarding home to school transport for residents of Little Brickhill, I have set out some key points of clarification below, which I trust will be helpful.

Catchment Areas/Admissions

The local authority has a statutory responsibility for ensuring there are sufficient school places within Milton Keynes Local Authority for its residents. School catchment areas across Milton Keynes were determined many years ago, during the development of the city and its schools, and sought to ensure children have access to local and sustainable education provision. Admission arrangements, which includes the consideration of catchment areas, is determined by the admission authority for the school. Academy, Foundation Schools, and Voluntary Aided Schools are responsible for determining their own admission arrangements, meaning Milton Keynes City Council is responsible for determining the admission arrangements for fewer than half of the schools across the city (and none of the secondary schools). Admission authorities are required by law to determine their admission arrangements annually, and consult on any significant changes, or at least, every seven years. Where there are areas of significant new housing development, Milton Keynes City Council will consider the education requirements and how they could be met – either through the acquisition of land and funding for a new school site, or via access to other local schools.

Little Brickhill has traditionally been listed within the catchment area for Sir Herbert Leon Academy and is deemed as the closest most appropriate school for the purposes of Home to School Transport. Over the years Walton High has expanded their catchment area to include a number of areas served

by other schools, including Little Brickhill. This is within their legal gift as the school is its own admissions authority. From a planning perspective, we determine that The Premier Academy (primary phase) and Sir Herbert Leon (secondary phase) are the nearest, most appropriate schools for children that live within Little Brickhill. These arrangements are longstanding and would have been consulted on at the time.

Admissions law allows for parental choice, subject to availability, when applying for school places; however, there is a clear expectation that parents choosing schools that are not their closest most appropriate schools, will need to consider how the child will get there as they will be responsible for this.

Transport

The home to school transport (HTST) budget already faces significant pressures, and the vast majority of this cost relates to transport support for children with significant additional needs that require access to specialist schools. Given the 14 children attending Cottesloe are not currently receiving support with HTST, the proposed costs of subsidising transport for these children would represent an additional pressure to the HTST budget, rather than any saving. The current budget reflects that some parents choose to access schools which are not their closest, most appropriate, school, and as this is a matter of parental choice it is not at the expense of the local tax payer. To agree contributions towards decisions that are made through parental choice, would be contrary to the current policy, and would set a precedent for all children who chose not to access their closest most appropriate school. This would have a significant and unsustainable impact on the Council Budget, leading to a review of the HTST policy or a need to cut other public services.

Milton Keynes City Council is also keen to support local children to access local schools, to support community cohesion and to help develop local high quality and successful education provision. Providing financial assistance to support parents to access provision outside of their local community and away from their local schools would be considered contrary to this and would likely be to the detriment of the local schools.

Home to school transport is currently provided for children in Little Brickhill accessing High Ash School, which is outside of Milton Keynes. This is an historic arrangement, based on High Ash being geographically the closest appropriate primary phase school to Little Brickhill. By contrast, Cottesloe is not geographically the closest most appropriate school for the secondary phase of education.

If families in Little Brickhill choose to attend Sir Herbert Leon Academy, they would have the opportunity to apply for free Home to School transport due to the village being over the statutory walking distance for secondary aged children. Each case would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and a decision made based on the cheapest, most appropriate option. The options could include a bus pass, a free MK Connect account, a Mileage payment, or a Family Led Travel Budget dependant on the family/individual circumstances, so it is difficult to accurately forecast a potential cost.

The opportunity of adding Little Brickhill to the current bus service to Aylesbury has been offered to Arriva, however, in the current climate they are unwilling to divert a bus for these users given the cost and journey time implications on them. If parents in Little Brickhill are wanting to work together to arrange their own transport.

I trust this is a helpful response to the questions raised but if you consider more is needed please don't hesitate to come back to me.

Kind Regards

Mac Heath

Director of Children's Services

To speak with me: use Microsoft Teams or 01908 253121

Milton Keynes City Council | Civic, 1 Saxon Gate East | Milton Keynes | MK9 3EJ



Dear David

Thank you for your email and its attachments. I apologise for the slight delay in replying but, as you know, the past week has been somewhat frantic. Your email was passing on your concerns regarding school transport costs from Little Brickhill in Milton Keynes Borough to The Cottesloe School in Buckinghamshire.

Unfortunately, the situation is not straight forward. Buckinghamshire Council runs school buses for Buckinghamshire children who are eligible for free school transport. The eligibility criteria are set out in our Home to School Transport Policy. Students living in Great Brickhill, Stoke Hammond and Newton Leys who are eligible for free school transport live within Buckinghamshire and The Cottesloe School is the nearest suitable Buckinghamshire school for those pupils.

There may be a small number of paid-for seats on some of our routes that are spare, which families who are not eligible for free transport can apply to purchase under our Spare Seats Scheme.

As I am sure you are aware, funding for home to school transport is under immense pressure. Buckinghamshire Council spends over £5 million on Council run school buses per year, because providing free school transport for eligible students living in Buckinghamshire is a Council-funded statutory duty. Whilst we do sell spare seats where available, the fees paid do not cover the full cost of the seat. Unfortunately, it is just not financially viable for us to run additional buses for non-eligible students, nor to waive fees for paid-for seats. Your residents can find out more about our Spare Seat Scheme on our website.

As Little Brickhill is in Milton Keynes, it is covered by Milton Keynes Borough Council's Home to School Transport Policy. The Applying for a secondary school place in Milton Keynes guide lists the catchment secondary school for Little Brickhill residents as either Sir Herbert Leon Academy or Walton High. The guide also states that children living in Little Brickhill are eligible for free home to school travel if they meet the low-income criteria.

In conclusion, should an Milton Keynes resident apply for a Milton Keynes school, then the Milton Keynes Home to School Transport policy will apply. If they are applying to a Buckinghamshire school,

then ours applies. Given the already high cost of this service we regretfully cannot add additional costs for pupils from a different authority.

Yours sincerely,

Best Regards

Martin Tett

Leader - Buckinghamshire Council



Coronation Community Celebration Grants

Milton Keynes City Council is making funding available to support events and activities to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. Some of these funds will be used to support large-scale events hosted by our partners. Additionally:

Milton Keynes City Council is making funding available to support events and activities to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. Some of these funds will be used to support large scale events hosted by our partners. The remainder will be allocated as follows:

- Up to £20,000 will be allocated directly to Local Councils (Parish, Town and Community Councils) for them to spend on suitable activities.
- Up to £20,000 will be made available in grants to residents, community groups, or other organisations groups operating in Milton Keynes.

Information about grants

Grant applications must be submitted to Milton Keynes City Council by midnight on Monday 10 April 2023, for up to £500 (small grants) and £500-£5,000 (medium grants).

Small grant applications will be reviewed immediately and if agreed, grants will be paid once the applicant has been notified. Funds will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. Medium grant applications will be assessed by a panel on Tuesday 11 April and applicants will be notified as soon as possible after that. Payments will be made as soon as practicable after determination.

Grants can be used by for a variety of projects or events to celebrate the Coronation, such as:

- Hire or purchase of equipment, or decorations for a local event
- Promotion of a local event
- Catering or entertainment for a local event
- Licenses or permits for local events
- Decorations for public places (such as bunting etc)

Criteria for assessing medium grant applications

These factors will be considered to determine medium grant applications:

- How many people are likely to participate
- The deliverability and viability of the project / event
- Whether the project / event will be arranged in partnership with other organisations

- How accessible and inclusive the project / event will be
- Links to volunteering opportunities or the promotion of voluntary work

For more information about the process, and application forms. please visit www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/coronation.

Enquiries about the grant application process and completed applications should be emailed to dsbusinesssupport@milton-keynes.gov.uk.

Elections 2023



Notices of Election were posted on Monday 27 March, signalling the start of the pre-election period, delivery of Poll Cards and the nomination of candidates.

Nominations for 19 MKCC Wards and 63 Parishes and Parish Wards will run from Monday 27 March until Tuesday 4 April on weekdays, between 10.00 – 16:00. Appointments to submit nomination papers can be booked directly with Peter Taylor peter.taylor@milton-keynes.gov.uk or Dominique Scholes.

Don't forget you can still request a range of resources to help us get the message across about voter-ID. Around 50 pull up banners have already been delivered to locations across MK, but there is still time to get involved – contact Dominique Scholes or Lisa Thompson to request posters, leaflets, digital resources, or pull up banners.

https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/UKMK/2023/03/24/file_attachments/2446820/Voter-ID%20local%20resources.pdf



Thames Valley Police Force Structure Review

In December 2022, Thames Valley Police (TVP) asked for feedback on their forces structures review before the Chief Constables management team make a final decision. The review aims to

enhance neighbourhood policing provides and to strengthen partnership working by helping to identify long- term improvements.

https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/UKMK/2023/03/23/file_attachments/2445752/Partner%20Feedback%20Report%20Feb%202023.pdf

In this letter the Chief Constable outlines the extension of the review for feedback to Friday 28 April by emailing forcereview@thamesvalley.police.uk. See the partner feedback report link above and the force review briefing

https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/UKMK/2023/03/23/file_attachments/2445751/Force%20Review%20briefing%20March%202023.pdf for further details on the proposals.

Postcode Checker Launch



Earlier this week MKCC added an easy to use postcode checker to the council website so residents can quickly check whether they've been assessed to receive wheelie bins or an alternative when Milton Keynes' new waste collection starts later this year. We'll also be writing to all residents in May to confirm what their property has been assessed to receive.

A direct link is available at <https://tinyurl.com/Wheelie-Bins>

Anyone can use the checker for another person. Residents without online access can call customer services who will use it on their behalf.

Residents can also use the checker to request a review of their property for a different solution, based on specific criteria around storage space and access (residents can't request a review based on personal preferences).

Reviews will start in May, running over a number of months. We're grateful if residents/neighbours would direct any residents seeking a review to the postcode checker.

Cllr David Hopkins

April 2023