



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

18th July 2019

Labour councillors call for special SEN Transport meeting

Bexley's Labour councillors have called for a special meeting of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) to be called after the discovery that the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) has upheld six complaints regarding SEN transport applications for children and young people with disabilities since the start of this year.

The call for the special meeting was made at the Full Council meeting held on 17th July 2019, where Labour councillors quoted from the six cases and subsequent changes to the council's policy as a result of the cases. This has been followed by a letter to the Head of Committee Services today from Labour councillors calling for a special meeting to be called.

During 2019, the LGO has published its findings of 11 complaints in London that it has received relating to School transport. 55% of the cases received from London are from one London Borough with 75% of the cases upheld by the LGO from the same London Borough – the London Borough of Bexley.

The Communities OSC held on 2nd July 2019 received a report on SEN Transport which failed to mention any of these six cases and a verbal report from the Cabinet Member for Education implied there had been no issues with applications for school transport.

Cllr Wendy Perfect, Shadow Cabinet Member for Education said: "Over the last year, the Labour Group have consistently questioned elements of the council's SEN transport policy and whether it complies with legal requirements and have received assurances that it did. However, the six decision letters from the LGO suggest this hasn't been the case, given the series of recommendations to update our policies and practices."

Cllr Mabel Ogundayo, Shadow Cabinet Member for Communities said: "Analysis by the Labour Group has shown the 2019/20 transport policy has been rewritten, following the advice from the LGO that we had not fulfilled our legal requirements in some of these cases. However, no mention was made of this at the Communities OSC meeting two weeks ago, despite an item regarding SEN transport being placed on the agenda. It is therefore imperative that a special meeting of the committee be called in order to ascertain what has occurred, what reviews of cases have taken place and how we ensure these failings do not occur again in the future."

-ENDS-

BEXLEY LABOUR GROUP PRESS RELEASE



Notes to editors:

- The six decision letters issued by the Local Government Ombudsman can be found at:

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/education/school-transport/18-012-904>

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/education/school-transport/18-008-486>

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/education/school-transport/18-012-597>

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/education/school-transport/18-011-365>

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/education/school-transport/18-010-415>

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/decisions/education/school-transport/18-010-993>

- The letter delivered to the Head of Committee Services and signed by Labour councillors is attached.
- For further information, please contact Councillor Wendy Perfect on wendy.perfect@bexley.gov.uk