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SC/LK

10<sup>th</sup> January 2013

Cllr John Thomas  
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Torbay Council  
Town Hall  
Torquay  
TQ1 3DR

By email only to: [Scrutiny@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:Scrutiny@torbay.gov.uk)

Dear Councillor Thomas

### Home to School Transport - Change of Policy Recommendation

I write with concern at the recommendation as part of budget cuts to immediately end Torbay Council's post 16 transport block contribution of £70,000 per annum, which has helped enable over 800 post 16 Torbay learners to access top quality vocational and academic training at South Devon College in 2012/13. The Home to School Transport original budget saving recommendation was for £11,000 (page 13).

We understand the need for budget savings and that the "prospective budget for 2013-14 is being developed on key principles that reflect the priorities of the Council of securing a cleaner Bay and more prosperous economy....."

A block contribution of £70,000 to support post 16 travel has been in place between Torbay Council, Stagecoach and South Devon College for the last 2 years (2010/11-£122,000), with considerable take up by learners and some of the lowest 'NEET' figures in the country.

Terminating this contribution has many risks which may not have been fully considered in the recommendation:-

- The post 16 government 16-19 bursary scheme referred to has replaced Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) support and will not be able to absorb this cut, and therefore participation is likely to fall
- An increased number of young people will be unable to access top quality training preparing them for employment and as a result of the barrier of cost of transport will risk becoming NEET, with consequences to their futures and other possible implications



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- The removal of the contribution may have an adverse impact on the viability of some bus services should learners and their families be unable to afford the bus pass
- Immediate ending of this contribution would jeopardise learning for 17 year old students halfway through their courses and should at worst be phased out over 3 years, in line with RPA (Raising the Participation Age) statutory changes
- Overall the decision may not be in the best long term economic interest of Torbay as it could lead to less participation, lower skills and employability for many young people
- Other potential cost savings/budget decisions with a more positive economic return may not have been considered as an alternative

The Priorities and Resources 2013/14 Review Panel are asked to consider this representation to sustain best practice in the interests of young people and longer term economic and social benefit.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Criddle  
Principal

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