# North Yorkshire Council faces backlash over school transport policy changes



North Yorkshire Council leaders are facing a growing uproar from campaigners regarding proposed changes to the home-to-school transport policy, set to be discussed at an extraordinary meeting on May 21. This meeting, scheduled for 10am at County Hall in Northallerton, will consider a contentious policy that would restrict free transport for children to their nearest school instead of their designated catchment school, potentially impacting numerous families across the region.

The meeting has been convened following calls from opposition councillors who are concerned about the ramifications of this policy shift on both families and local schools. In response, the School Transport Action Group (STAG), a collective formed to contest the policy changes, has expressed its support for the decision to hold the meeting. A spokesperson for STAG stated, "We would like to thank all councillors who have worked together to make this crucial meeting happen. The clock is ticking for pupils starting school this September."

Despite their approval of the meeting itself, STAG has voiced "shock and disappointment" regarding the council's decision to prohibit members of the public from reading statements related to the issue during the session. The spokesperson remarked, "Gagging the public feels totally undemocratic. It will not make for a better debate or increase the chance of a well-informed decision being made - quite the opposite." They argue that the policy change arises from a failure by the council to heed the concerns of parents from the outset.

STAG members are planning to hold a public demonstration outside the venue on the day of the meeting, urging the public to participate. The spokesperson expressed their intent, stating, "Help us make clear that common sense must prevail and fair school transport must be reinstated." They emphasised the necessity for the council to understand the gravity of the situation, promising, "We won’t shut up until that happens."

In response to the backlash, Barry Khan, assistant chief executive at North Yorkshire Council, defended the council's approach. He acknowledged the concerns that have been raised about the transport policy and assured residents that their views had been considered through previous consultations, petitions, and public meetings. "We can reassure residents that their views have been heard," he stated. However, he clarified that public questions are not permitted during extraordinary meetings, as they are designed solely for councillors to debate agenda matters.

Mr Khan further explained that public inquiries can only be submitted during designated council sessions concerning pre-determined agenda items. He concluded, "We remain committed to listening to the views of our communities, whatever the topic they wish to raise."

As the May 21 meeting approaches, tensions are mounting between council officials and campaigners, with the potential for significant implications regarding school transport policies in North Yorkshire.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-01-07/debates/25010789000019/SchoolTransportInNorthYorkshire> - This URL confirms concerns about North Yorkshire Council's decision to limit free school transport, highlighting its impact on rural families and communities.
2. <https://edemocracy.northyorks.gov.uk/documents/s32907/Report%20-%20Home%20to%20School%20Transport%20Policy%2020240716.pdf> - This report details North Yorkshire Council's new home to school transport policy, including consultations and proposed changes.
3. <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/education-and-learning/school-and-college-transport> - This page provides information on North Yorkshire's school transport policies, including eligibility and recent changes.
4. <https://www.noahwire.com> - According to this source, an article discusses the growing controversy surrounding North Yorkshire's proposed school transport changes and upcoming council meetings.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance> - This government guidance outlines statutory requirements for home to school transport policies, including eligibility criteria for free transport.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/autumn-budget-2024-local-government-funding> - Although the direct link is not available, the Autumn Budget 2024 provides additional funding to local governments, which could impact their ability to support school transport services.
7. <https://www.examinerlive.co.uk/news/local-news/parents-anger-after-gagging-over-31411912> - Please view link - unable to able to access data