



## IGHTHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Ightham Parish Council  
c/o Gable Cottage  
Ismays Road  
Ightham  
TN15 9BE

20 July 2022

Dear Lady Vere

I am writing to you on behalf of Ightham Parish Council about the withdrawal of 4 out of 5 of our school bus routes from September, that has just been announced. This will have a hugely damaging impact on our local school children, affecting their ability to get to school and leaving parents no option but to drive to school if they are able or to look at moving their children to another school or even to move house. This is wholly unacceptable, especially given the recent disruption to education during the pandemic and the impact of a huge increase in car miles on climate change which we are all supposed to be addressing.

Ightham is a semi-rural village, we have no railway station, and a large number of our secondary schoolchildren rely on the buses every weekday to get to and from school in Tonbridge (approx. 7 miles) and to Tunbridge Wells (approx. 14 miles). Walking is not an option given the distances and the nature of the country roads means that it would be dangerous to cycle.

Up until now, the bus services through Ightham, despite being overcrowded, have been reliable and enabled children to get to Tonbridge and Tonbridge Wells schools. The withdrawal of the TW13, TW10 and TW11 and potential withdrawal of the 222 will only leave the 223 for children to get to Tonbridge and there will be no direct service to Tunbridge Wells. The 223 is only a single decker bus and there is standing room only each morning by the time it gets to the last stop in Ightham before proceeding through other villages towards Tonbridge. It certainly will not be able to accommodate the excess children that would have used the other bus services, leaving many children with no means of getting to school on public transport.

Parents chose the schools based on the previously good transport links and were allocated their places by KCC. It is unfeasible, not to mention hugely disruptive to try and find a space at the most local secondary schools to Ightham, which are already oversubscribed.

KCC's transport strategy and the decision to close 139 bus routes across the county in order to save £3m in bus subsidies has created this situation and the impact has been more far

reaching and affected many more services than were identified in their recent bus consultation. We understand that this was due to lack of engagement with bus operators. The decision has been badly thought through and left us with far fewer services than originally communicated. We understand that KCC is due to receive £35m in a bus services improvement grant and question the ability of KCC to allocate funding appropriately. We would urge you to withhold this until KCC can make assurances that they will provide school children with an acceptable means of getting to the school that they were allocated and fulfil their transport obligations under the Education Act.

I am copying in leaders and our MP and hope that you are able to exert pressure at appropriate levels to ensure that there is sufficient allocation of funds to reinstate the services that have been and are due to be withdrawn and give assurances to children and their parents that they will be able to get to school in September.

Yours sincerely

Rodney Willingham  
**Chairman**  
**Ightham Parish Council**

**Copied To:**  
**Tom Tugendhat MP – Tonbridge & Malling**  
**Roger Gough – Kent County Council**  
**David Brazier – Kent County Council**  
**Cllr Harry Rayner – Kent County Council**