**Proposer:** Cllr Eddie Reeves

**Seconder:** Cllr Adam Nell

**Subject:** Children’s health, wellbeing and access to educational provision

**Drafted in readiness for:** Full Council on 27 February 2023

This Council notes with concern Oxfordshire County Council’s decision to withdraw school bus services under its Spare Seats scheme without parental or wider public consultation.

Oxfordshire’s Spare Seats programme has offered children a safe and affordable bus service to school for over 35 years, the scheme having largely been cost-neutral throughout its operation. Under the scheme, families are offered spare seats for their children on school buses taking children eligible for free home-to-school transport at reasonable cost.

Following a decision by Oxfordshire County Council, nearly 10 routes in predominantly rural areas are set to be cancelled from September 2023, with more set to follow as contracts are retendered. This decision will affect the 1-WA17 route serving the Warriner School and the 2-ML05 route to the Marlborough CoE School. Over the medium term, as many as 1,384 students could be affected.

Oxfordshire County Council has defended its decision on the basis that it has no legal obligation to operate the scheme, adding that its continuation:

*“would incur a financial cost and reinforces children travelling to schools further away than their nearest school”*.

This Council strongly disagrees with this reinterpretation of what has been established policy and practice. For clarity, it does so on financial grounds as well as for reasons of personal choice, child safety and environmental protection.

This Council instructs the Leader of the Council to write to the Leader and Deputy Leader of Oxfordshire County Council to urge them to reverse their decision as a matter of urgency.

**249 words**