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Emne: Input from UWC RCN - school structure

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To whom it may concern:

I am writing to provide input on the proposed changes to the school structure in Fjaler. I am writing in my capacity as Rektor of UWC Red Cross Nordic.

UWC Red Cross Nordic and our associated company, UWC Connect, employ in the region of 70 people. Approximately 25 of our employees live on our campus in Haugland, a little over 2km from Flekke. It take approximately 30 minutes to walk from the campus to Flekke Skule, or 12 minutes by bike.

Our on-campus employees are typically international staff. They come from a range of countries, and the majority of them are originally from countries outside of the European Union. When new employees join the school from abroad, they face very significant difficulties in getting the right to drive in Norway. This is because the licences are not transferable and practically it is very difficult for a person living in Haugland without access to a driver or car to take driving lessons and qualify for the licence. This means that it can take years for a staff member to be able to drive in Norway, or to be able to get a licence at all.

The current arrangement, where the school is a reasonably short distance from the college, allows this group of staff to do the following things that would not be possible if the school is closed:

- Collect their children from school if they fall ill during the school day or for some other reason need to come home
- Use SFO for before and after school care (because using this service means there is no transport otherwise provided). This enables both parents to work full time.
- Join individual parent meetings and attend class parent meetings
- Attend school events such as performances, Easter breakfast, the welcome events at the start of the school year
- Participate in "dugnad" and other parent activities
- Participate in orientation when their children newly join the school

Some of these are important for the education of the children. Others are important for the integration into the community and still others are important for the facilitation of working life for adults moving to Fjaler.

Beyond this, the fact that the school is in Flekke means that the social life for younger children typically takes place in the village. This enables the following things:

- Children can join social activities at the weekends and after school easily - whether pre-planned or ad hoc

- Children and parents can attend birthday parties. This enables children to participate and parents to integrate socially
- Children can be independent (especially when they are a little older) in the organisation of their own social lives

I would also note that we consider it to be a positive thing that quite a large number of journeys locally can be made on foot and by bike. This also has the positive effect of reducing the traffic on the road between Haugland and Flekke (because the children can travel by bike and therefore don't need to be driven) which is also important to us because our students walk so much down the road to Flekke.

Overall, we do consider that Flekke school plays an important role both in enabling children to participate fully in society with their friends and also for the integration of families into the local community. The practical and logistical challenges of moving the education of younger children to Dale are significant for us and for our employees. All of the bullet pointed things above would become significantly more difficult, and potentially impossible, for a proportion of our staff.

I worry that over time, either our community here in Haugland will become very insular, or that we will struggle to recruit or retain non-European staff members. In both cases, I see this as a negative for the college (we wish for our teachers to be well-integrated and we wish for them to stay longer) but also for the kommune, which benefits from a diverse range of families moving in and staying.

Best wishes,

Natasha Lambert

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