

Report

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Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	5 October 2011
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	School Transport – Review by Member/Officer Task and Finish Group
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide a progress update on the work of the Task and Finish Group established to examine current arrangements for the provision of school transport; and
- ◆ advise of recommendations arising from the work of the group.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Executive Committee is asked to approve the following recommendations arising from the work of the Task and Finish Group on School Transport:-

- (1) the distance criterion for the allocation of transport to primary age pupils be increased to provide transport for children who live more than 2 miles from their catchment school.
- (2) the distance criterion for the allocation of transport to secondary age pupils be increased to provide transport for pupils who live more than 3 miles from their catchment school.
- (3) the distance criteria of 2 miles for primary age children and 3 miles for secondary age pupils be applied in the allocation of transport to children attending Gaelic medium provision;
- (4) that appropriate officers carry out a further review of Additional Support Needs (ASN) transport provision; the use of Council fleet vehicles; the paid privilege scheme and of current service delivery arrangements.

3. Background

3.1. During 2010 the Executive Committee established a Task and Finish Group on School Transport. The group was asked to examine current arrangements for the provision of school transport and make recommendations to achieve an inclusive and efficient school transport model within current legislative requirements. The group included Councillors, officers and trade union officials. Councillor Graham Simpson was appointed as Chair.

3.2. The group met on six occasions to discuss and agree recommendations on a range of topics including:

- distance criteria used to allocate mainstream school transport and transport for children and young people attending Gaelic medium provision;
- the balance of use made of taxi contracts and Fleet Services vehicles to transport children with additional support needs to school;

- services provided by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport;
- considering the potential to make further use of fleet vehicles for school trips; and
- the effectiveness of the paid privilege transport scheme.

4. Proposals

4.1. Distance criteria for the provision of mainstream school transport

The Council currently provides transport for primary age children who live more than one mile from their catchment school. Transport is also provided for secondary age pupils who live more than two miles from their catchment school. The overall annual cost of providing mainstream school transport is £5m.

4.2. Benchmarking information considered by the group indicated that twenty five of the thirty two local authorities within Scotland provide transport using greater distance criteria than South Lanarkshire Council. Councillors on the Task and Finish Group agreed to recommend an increase in the distance eligibility criteria for mainstream school transport from 1 to 2 miles for primary age children and from 2 to 3 miles for secondary age pupils.

4.3. Distance criteria for the provision of transport for children attending Gaelic medium provision

The Council currently provides transport for all children and young people enrolled for Gaelic medium provision. This means that around 80 primary age and 16 secondary age pupils are provided with transport to their Gaelic medium provision. The total cost of this service is around £0.2m per year.

4.4. Councillors on the Task and Finish Group agreed to recommend that the increased distance eligibility criteria (over 2 miles for primary age children and 3 miles for secondary age pupils), be applied in the allocation of Council transport for children attending a Gaelic medium provision.

4.5. Transport for children with additional support needs

The provision of transport for pupils with additional support needs costs approximately £4.8m each year. This includes £3.6m which is expended on private hire taxi contracts. Fleet Services have achieved significant efficiencies through placing more pupils on fleet vehicles instead of private hire taxis. This has reduced costs by £610,000 and a further reduction of £180,000 is forecast for 2011/12.

4.6 It is recommended that Fleet Services in liaison with Education Resources should continue with the strategy of more efficiently utilising vehicles to achieve best value for the Council. This may include using mainstream contracts to meet the transport needs of children with additional support needs where this is appropriate.

5. Future work streams and review

5.1. It is recommended that officers consider other aspects of school transport provision are further considered including the role of Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, the effectiveness of the paid privilege scheme and the potential to further use fleet vehicles for school trips.

6. Employee Implications

6.1 There are no employee implications arising from this report.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 The overall annual cost of providing mainstream school transport is £5m. It is estimated that a saving of around £1.6m could be achieved through implementation of the increased distance criteria proposed within this report.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1 A requirement for seatbelts in mainstream secondary school transport contracts in addition to those for primary aged children is designed to mitigate against the risk to young people. This requirement will be introduced as mainstream contracts become due for renewal.
- 8.2 Recognition has been given to the sustainable development strategy and in particular the environmental implications that arise from the recommendations in this report as they relate to transport. Through the tender process cognisance will continue to be given to those contractors who work towards reducing carbon emissions.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1 An equality impact assessment has been carried out on the recommendations contained in this report. There is no evidence that different target equality groups have different needs in relation to this policy. Where a particular target group has a specific need in terms of transport, this will be covered under other legislation such as, the Additional Support Needs Act.
- 9.2 A task and finish group was established to examine current arrangements for the provision of school transport and in line with the council's commitment to partnership working the group membership included elected members, trade union representatives and officers.

Larry Forde
Executive Director (Education Resources)

22 September 2011

Link(s) to Council Objectives/Values

- ◆ Efficient and effective use of resources

Previous References

- ◆ Executive Committee – 23 June 2010

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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