

Report

7

Report to:	Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum
Date of Meeting:	18 January 2011
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	Member/Officer Task and Finish Group – School Transport
----------	--

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ note progress and recommendations with regards to implementing an inclusive and efficient school transport model within the legislative criteria.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the following proposals arising from the work of the Member/Officer Task and Finish Group looking at School Transport be endorsed.
- ◆ Eligible mainstream transport distance:
 - Primary: home address more than 2 miles from catchment school.
 - Secondary: home address more than 3 miles from catchment school.
 - ◆ Eligible Gaelic transport distance:
 - Primary: home address more than 2 miles from catchment school.
 - Secondary: home address more than 3 miles from catchment school.
 - ◆ Continue to review ASN transport provision.
 - ◆ Propose feasibility study for alternative service provision of mainstream transport from August 2011.
 - ◆ More efficient use of fleet vehicles for school journeys.
 - ◆ Paid privilege to be reviewed after Easter 2011.
 - ◆ If recommendations approved, the group to be reconvened to consider future work streams.

3. Background

3.1. A Task and Finish Group comprising of elected members from all parties, council officers and trade union officials was set up to implement an inclusive and efficient school transport model within the legislative criteria. Councillor Graham Simpson was appointed Chair of the group.

3.2. The group held six separate meetings to discuss and agree recommendations relevant to the proposed objectives.

3.3. The discussion topics included :-

- the qualification distances with regards to mainstream school transport;
- the qualification distances with regards to Gaelic transport;
- the use of taxi contracts and Fleet Services vehicles for ASN transport;

- the services provided by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport;
- the use of fleet vehicles for school trips;
- ASN transport provision for families who have a vehicle through the motability scheme;
- the possibility of Fleet Services undertaking the functions currently carried out by SPT with regards to mainstream school transport; and
- Paid privilege transport.

4. Outcomes

4.1. The qualification distances with regards to Mainstream school transport

Mainstream school transport currently operates a policy where primary pupils who live more than one mile from their catchment school are entitled to transport and secondary pupils who live more than two miles from their catchment school are entitled to school transport.

This cost of this policy is approximately £5M per annum.

Twenty five of the thirty two local authorities within Scotland operate a less generous transport entitlement than South Lanarkshire Council.

The estimated saving of implementing the legislative distance is £1.6M.

The elected members on the group voted that the council adopt a position for eligibility of mainstream school transport of over 2 miles for primary school children and over 3 miles for secondary school children.

4.2. The qualification distances with regards to Gaelic transport

Gaelic transport currently transports around 80 primary school pupils and 16 secondary school pupils at an approximate cost of £0.2M per year. The majority of children attending both Mount Cameron Gaelic Unit and Calderglen High School live within East Kilbride.

As both schools are the only recognised Gaelic schools within South Lanarkshire Council, their catchment area for Gaelic education covers all of South Lanarkshire Council.

Transport entitlement for this catchment area will only be provided where children live outwith the current qualification distances.

The elected members on the group voted that the council provide Gaelic transport as per the recommended position for mainstream school transport of over 2 miles for primary school children and over 3 miles for secondary school children.

4.3. The use of taxi contracts and Fleet Services vehicles for ASN transport

The provision of transport for ASN pupils costs approximately £4.8M on an annual basis and £3.6M is expended on private hire taxi contracts (Appendix 1).

Fleet Services as part of a Best Value Review have made progress on placing more pupils on fleet vehicles instead of private hire taxis which has reduced costs by £610,000 and a further reduction of £180,000 is forecast this year.

An investigation into whether families who have vehicles as a result of the motability scheme should access ASN transport was carried out and it was confirmed that their child would still qualify for ASN transport.

The group 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 would include having appropriate vehicles for all children with ASN, reviewing contracts on an annual basis, including ASN children on mainstream contracts where appropriate and initially placing children on a fleet vehicle unless their additional support need prohibited this.

4.4. The possibility of Fleet Services undertaking the functions currently carried out by SPT with regards to mainstream school transport

SPT presented to the group the functions it carried out with regards mainstream school transport on behalf of the council.

Fleet Services presented an initial paper that recommended that a further review of this provision be undertaken to ascertain if Fleet Services could carry out this function at a lower cost to the council (Appendix 2).

The group recommended that this review should be undertaken and presented to the group at a later date expected to be August 2011.

4.5. The use of fleet vehicles for school trips

Fleet Services have sufficient capacity to meet core educational requirements during the day which could offer an efficient and effective service for schools which need a vehicle for a trip during the school day.

The group recommended that when Fleet Services have the appropriate systems in place to offer this service that Education Resources will communicate this to all school within an official procedure note to make sure that their first option on a vehicle should be through Fleet Services if available.

4.6. Paid privilege transport

Paid privilege transport started in October 2010.

The group recommended that a review of Paid privilege transport be undertaken after Easter 2011.

5. Employee Implications

5.1. There are no employee implications.

6. Financial Implications

6.1. There is an approximate saving of £1.6M which relates to recommendation (1).

7. Other Implications

7.1. Insurance and Risk Implications have been considered.

8. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

8.1. This report does introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, if approved an impact assessment is required.

Larry Forde
Executive Director (Education Resources)

6 December 2010

Link(s) to Council Objectives/Values

- Efficient and effective use of resources

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

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

Sara Fellows, Head of Education (Resources)

Ext: 2066 (Tel: 01698 452066)

E-mail: sara.fellows@southlanarkshire.gov.uk