

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

To : Education (Resources) Sub-Committee	Subject : School Transport arranged by SPT: Performance Review 2000/2001
From : Director of Education	
Date : 04 May 2001	
Ref : MM/BB/AS	

Summary

This report reviews the mainstream transport contract arrangements. It aims to ensure that the financial performance of the contracts, the agency role of SPT and the general performance of transport contractors are subject to scrutiny by the sub-committee.

Recommendations

The education (resources) sub-committee is recommended to:

- (a) note the performance of the home to school transport contracts arranged by SPT for the period 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2001.
- (b) request the submission of further performance reports to future meetings of the sub-committee.

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Members wishing further information about this report should contact

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School Transport arranged by SPT - Performance Review

Report by the Director of Education

1. Background.

- 1.1 This report covers the period 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2001 inclusive and covers checks on contracts and vehicles inspections carried out by the Executive's Engineering Inspectors. These checks are part of the Quality Assurance System which aims to ensure that school contracts operated on behalf of North Lanarkshire Council by SPT meet the quality standards set by the Council.
- 1.2 Within the North Lanarkshire Council area there are 84 primary schools and 30 secondary schools currently provided with transport for pupils who are eligible for free transport to and from school. This requirement is met by a total of 223 contracts, of which 125 serve primary schools and 116 serve secondary schools. A number of contracts serve both primary and secondary schools and these are included in the totals for both primary and secondary schools.
- 1.4 Currently a total of 9,552 pupils are provided with transport to and from their schools on the above contracts. This total includes 3,490 primary pupils and 6,062 secondary pupils.

2. Monitoring.

- 2.1 Monitoring of schools contracts is undertaken on both a proactive and reactive basis. Proactive monitoring is based on a programme of checks with the aim of covering all contracts at least once during the school year. When complaints are received, re-active monitoring takes place with intensive checks being made on both the contracts concerned and the operator of the contracts. Additionally, where complaints are received regarding vehicles, arrangements are made to have the vehicles inspected by the Executive's engineering inspectors.

3. Checks on Contracts.

- 3.1 Within the North Lanarkshire Council area, a total of 104 (83.2%) contracts serving primary schools and 112 (96.5%) contracts serving secondary schools were checked. 701 checks were carried out by the Executive's Customer Care Inspectors. In a number of cases, some contracts were checked more than once, particularly if complaints had been received. The level of checks carried out during each period is shown in the table below.

Period Ending	Number of Contracts Checked (Primaries)	Number of Contracts Checked (Secondaries)
30-Apr-00	10	7
31-May-00	22	9
30-Jun-00	19	7
31-Jul-00	0	0
31-Aug-00	14	12
30-Sep-00	25	14
31-Oct-00	29	12
30-Nov-00	27	10
31-Dec-00	11	8
31-Jan-01	23	9
28-Feb-01	29	12
31-Mar-01	15	12
Total number of checks	224	112

4. Checks at Schools.

- 4.1 Customer Care checks have been carried out at a total of 74 primary and 24 secondary schools between 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2001. This means that 88% of primary schools and 92% of secondary schools have been visited by the Customer Care Inspectors to check on contracts.
- 4.2 Some schools were checked on more than one occasion resulting in an overall total of 313 checks at primary schools and 388 checks at secondary schools.

Period Ending	Checks at Primary Schools	Checks at Secondary Schools
30-Apr-00	10	31
31-May-00	29	39
30-Jun-00	32	24
31-Jul-00	0	0
31-Aug-00	24	36
30-Sep-00	47	55
31-Oct-00	36	31
30-Nov-00	32	31
31-Dec-00	17	17
31-Jan-01	29	37
28-Feb-01	33	43
31-Mar-01	24	44
Total number of checks	313	388

5. Contract Monitoring at other Locations.

- 5.1 As part of the overall contract monitoring, a number of contracts were checked at locations other than the school. These checks are undertaken at the "home" end of the school journey, both in the morning and afternoon, or at a point along the route taken. This is aimed at ensuring that contractors operate within the agreed contract specification throughout the school journey. This monitoring results in fewer checks being undertaken at schools, but overall, results in more comprehensive monitoring of contracts. The level of monitoring at locations other than at schools is detailed below.

During the period 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2001 a total of 76 contracts have been monitored at locations other than at the school, consisting of 28 contracts serving primary schools and 51 contracts serving secondary schools. Three contracts serve both primary and secondary schools. The following table details this monitoring.

Period Ending	Number of Contracts monitored at locations other than the School (Primaries)	Number of Contracts monitored at locations other than the School (Secondaries)
30-Apr-00	0	8
31-May-00	5	3
30-Jun-00	1	3
31-Jul-00	0	0
31-Aug-00	0	0
30-Sep-00	0	4
31-Oct-00	5	3
30-Nov-00	6	17
31-Dec-00	2	3
31-Jan-01	6	15
28-Feb-01	5	6
31-Mar-01	9	12
Total number of Contracts Monitored	39	74

6. Checks on Vehicles

- 6.1 Checks on vehicles are divided into operational checks undertaken by the Executive's Customer Care Inspectors and engineering checks undertaken by the Executive's Engineering Inspectors.
- 6.2 Generally, operational checks are undertaken at schools whilst engineering checks are conducted at operator's garages or other maintenance premises. Engineering checks are also undertaken at schools, mainly as "spot checks" and usually following specific complaints regarding vehicle condition.

6.3 Checks by Customer Care Inspectors.

The Customer Care Inspectors carried out a total of 845 checks on vehicles operating on school contracts within the North Lanarkshire Council area. The number of vehicle checks are summarised in the following tables.

Period Ending	Checks on Double Deck Buses	Checks on Single Deck Buses	Checks on MiniBuses	Checks on Taxis
30-Apr-00	14	30	3	1
31-May-00	21	43	7	14
30-Jun-00	14	30	6	17
31-Jul-00	0	0	0	0
31-Aug-00	19	36	3	5
30-Sep-00	37	58	3	16
31-Oct-00	23	46	4	9
30-Nov-00	26	46	4	9
31-Dec-00	5	35	2	3
31-Jan-01	18	47	4	9
28-Feb-01	23	44	2	14
31-Mar-01	43	40	6	6
Total number of checks	243	455	44	103

6.4 Checks by Vehicle Engineering Inspectors.

During the period covered by this report, 131 vehicles belonging to 31 bus operators were inspected by the Passenger Transport Executive's vehicle examiners. A total of 14 taxi operators were also inspected, with 29 vehicles being examined.

Period Ending	Double Deck Buses Inspected	Single Deck Buses Inspected	Minibuses Inspected	Taxis Inspected
30-Apr-00	3	5	1	1
31-May-00	6	4	2	0
30-Jun-00	0	3	3	2
31-Jul-00	1	5	0	0
31-Aug-00	0	8	0	9
30-Sep-00	5	6	0	1
31-Oct-00	2	2	1	4
30-Nov-00	3	6	2	5
31-Dec-00	3	1	0	4
31-Jan-01	0	5	4	1
28-Feb-01	1	3	0	2
31-Mar-01	11	5	1	0
Total number of	35	53	14	29

<i>vehicles checked</i>				
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6.5 Pre-contract Vehicle Inspections

Before awarding contracts to new contractors, pre-contract vehicle inspections are carried out to determine if the potential contractor is carrying out maintenance on the vehicles to the required standard. During the period covered by this report a total of three contractors had vehicles inspected, consisting of 5 single deck vehicles. One of the operators was found to be unsatisfactory and was not awarded any contracts.

7 Multi-Departmental and Multi-Agency Checks

7.1 The Executive has commenced a series of simultaneous checks on operators by the Customer Care Inspectors and the Executives Engineering Inspectors. The Customer Care Inspectors note details of vehicles operating on school contracts and these are then passed to the Engineering Inspectors who then examine these vehicles for mechanical condition on the same day.

7.2 Additionally, the co-operation of the vehicle inspectorate and police is sought on a regular basis, resulting in joint checks on operators being carried out. These multi-departmental and multi-agency checks will continue to be undertaken on an ongoing basis to further strengthen the checks carried out on operators.

8 Specific Problems Investigated.

8.1 During the period covered by this report, in addition to the routine monitoring of contracts, a number of specific problems were investigated and action taken to remedy the situation. These were reported to the sub-committee during the financial year.

9. Rail Transport.

9.1 School transport is provided using services operated by ScotRail for a total of 315 pupils attending St. Ambrose High School. During the period covered by this report a total of 3 checks have been carried out on the five contracts held by Scotrail. It should be noted that these contracts are funded by Glasgow City Council as all of the pupils travelling are resident within that council area.

10. Joint Operations with Strathclyde Police.

10.1 The Joint SPT and Strathclyde Police School Bus Initiative was again successfully implemented from the beginning of March 2001. This is now of greater importance as the annual "Operation Coachman" national exercise is not being undertaken in Scotland.

- 10.2 An added advantage of the School Bus Initiative is that instead of an intensive effort over a two week period, the initiative will run until the end of term covering a much wider area. This means that more contractors and vehicles will be examined over a longer time, hopefully leading to improved vehicle maintenance.
- 10.3 These joint inspections were carried out in the morning when buses arrived at schools and were aimed at ensuring that buses were roadworthy and that all requirements of the contracts were met. Vehicles were checked by Strathclyde Passenger Transport's Customer care Inspectors to ensure that the conditions of contract were being complied with whilst the police checked that the vehicles were being operated legally and were in a roadworthy condition.
- 10.4 The vehicle examinations were conducted by both Strathclyde Police and the Passenger Transport Executive's Engineering Inspectors who work to the same standards as the Vehicle Inspectorate. This results in vehicles being given a comprehensive "roadside" examination.

In the North Lanarkshire Council area, this initiative resulted in a total of 28 vehicles being inspected. The schools where joint inspections were carried out are listed below.

Date	School	Number of Vehicles Checked
10 May 2000	Caldervale High School, Airdrie	9
22 May 2000	St. Margaret's High School, Airdrie	9
14 March 2001	Clyde Valley High School, Wishaw.	10

- 10.5 Of the 28 vehicles inspected 19 were found to be in a satisfactory condition with no defects being found.
- 10.6 Of the remaining 9 vehicles, one vehicle was issued with an inspection notice in respect of two minor defects and one vehicle was issued with a defect notice in respect of a missing fuel filler cap and a fire extinguisher with an expired test date. Three vehicles were issued with delayed prohibition notices in respect of oil leaks and one of these vehicles was also found to have a torn seat. It should be noted that one of these vehicles was operating on a private contract not arranged by SPT or North Lanarkshire Council. One vehicle was issued with a delayed prohibition due to a missing nearside windscreen wiper assembly. One vehicle did not have an emergency break glass device and the emergency exit was not marked as such. This resulted in the issue of a delayed prohibition. The remaining two vehicles were both issued with immediate prohibitions. One vehicle in respect of a defective tyre, defective front axle and an air leak from the air braking system. The vehicle was also found to have a defective exhaust system that resulted in a delayed prohibition. The other vehicle was found to have a defective emergency door open warning device and also a loose shock absorber mounting. The flooring of this vehicle was also torn and worn in places. In addition, one vehicle operating on a private contract to St. Margaret's High School in Airdrie that was not arranged by either SPT or North Lanarkshire Council was given a delayed prohibition due to having an oil leak.

11. The Fuel Crisis

- 11.1 Fuel deliveries were disrupted between 11th and 15th September 2000 because of blockade protests about the high price of fuel. The lorry drivers blockaded Grangemouth oil refinery, with the result that there were no deliveries of fuel.

Contractors began to run short of fuel from 12th September 2000 and there was potential for severe disruption to school transport.

However, most contractors had either enough fuel in stock or were able to continue to obtain sufficient fuel for contracts to continue to be operated until the 15th September. Many contractors indicated that they would have to cease operations on or after the 18th September.

Two contractors ran out of fuel, with the result that a total of 444 pupils attending the schools detailed in the table below were unable to be transported to and from school on the 14th September 2000.

Date	School	Number of pupils affected.
14 th September 2000	Coatbridge High School	103
	Chryston High	22
	Cumbernauld High School	30
	Eastfield Primary	49
	Greengairs Primary	26
	Our Lady's High School, Cumbernauld	24
	St. Ambrose High School, Coatbridge.	146
	St. Margaret's of Scotland Primary	24
	St. Serf's Primary, Airdrie	20

In addition to the above schools, 1183 pupils from the schools detailed in the table below were not transported to and from school on 15th September 2000

Date	School	Number of pupils affected.
15 th September 2000	Cardinal Newman High School, Bellshill	150
	Cathedral Primary, Motherwell	73
	Knowetop Primary, Motherwell	102
	Newmains Primary	59
	Our Lady's High School, Motherwell	195
	St. Aidans High School, Wishaw	453
	St. Aidans Primary, Wishaw	85
	St. Thomas Primary, Wishaw	66

The fuel blockades were lifted from the 15th September and fuel deliveries recommenced immediately with the result that all school transport operated normally from the 18th September 2000, with the exception of one contract that did not return to normal operation until the afternoon of the 19th September 2000.

12. Adverse Weather

- 12.1 Throughout the latter part of January and the early part of February 2001, there were a number of extremely cold mornings, with temperatures as low as -12C in places. This led to some disruption of transport due to icy conditions, particularly in rural districts.
- 12.2 Due to heavy snow between 5th and 6th February 2001, transport was disrupted, particularly in outlying areas. Most contractors endeavoured to provide a normal service, but in some cases this was not possible due to roads being impassable. Most roads were passable by the 7th February 2001.
- 12.3 Further blizzards on 26th and 27th February caused widespread disruption in outlying areas. All schools in North Lanarkshire were closed from lunchtime on 27th February and a number of schools in the Shotts and Wishaw areas were closed on the 28th February. The schools with disrupted transport provision are detailed below.

Schools closed due to Adverse Weather on 27/28 February 2001	
Alexander Peden Primary School	Kirk O' Shotts Primary School
Allanton Primary School	Morningside Primary school
Calderhead High School	Overtown Primary School
Castlehill Primary School	St. Brigid's Primary School
Clyde Valley High School	Stane Primary School
Dykehead Primary School	

13. **Action for Non Performance of Contracts.**

- 13.1 As a result of monitoring through the Executives' system of four weekly traffic returns and the issuing of warning letters, a total of £8,428.35 was deducted from payments due to contractors for the period between 1st April 2000 and 31st March 2001.
- 13.2 During the period April 2000 to March 2001, 8 contracts were cancelled due to being no longer required. A further contract was cancelled because the contractor was found to be speeding and using a mobile telephone whilst driving.
- 13.3 Warning letters may be issued to operators drawing attention to apparent breaches of the conditions of contract. In the event of the explanation not being acceptable deductions are made from payments, and the warning is recorded against the contractor. If there are continued breaches of contract conditions, contracts may be withdrawn, generally if more than 4 warnings are issued in a 12 week period, or more than 6 warnings in a 12 month period.
- 13.4 During the period 1st April 2000 to 31 March 2001, a total of 256 warning letters were issued to contractors in respect of failure to meet the required performance. A total of 50 warning letters were rescinded after appeal, resulting in a total of 206 warning letters standing. 43 warnings were confirmed following unsuccessful appeals.

14 **Budget**

14.1 The projected expenditure for 2000/2001 for home to school transport for primary and secondary pupils is £2,475,762 against a budget £2,307,386. The anticipated overspend is, therefore, £168,376.

14.2 The overspend has occurred as a result of additional transport arranged in the Cumbernauld area following rezoning. In addition, it includes transport for pupils to Stane Primary School and Baird Memorial Primary School. The cost of transport for this will be recouped through insurance claims.

15 **Recommendations**

15.1 The education (resources) sub-committee is recommended to:

- (a) note the performance of the home to school transport contracts arranged by SPT for the period 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2001.
- (b) request the submission of further performance reports to future meetings of the sub-committee.

MM/BB/AS
04 May 2001

