

**NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL**

**REPORT**

To: Education (Resources) Sub-Committee	Subject:  School Transport arranged by SPT: Performance Review
From: Director of Education	
Date: 26 September 2001	
Ref: MM/KF/NMcA	

**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:

- (i) note the performance of the home to school transport contracts arranged by SPT for the period 2 April 2001 to 29 June 2001.
- (ii) request the submission of further performance reports to future meetings of the sub-committee.

*Michael O'Neill*

Members wishing further information about this report should contact:  
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## NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL : EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

### School Transport Arranged by SPT : Performance Review

#### Report by the Director of Education

#### 1. Background.

- 1.1 This report covers the period April 2001 to 29 June 2001 and covers the monitoring of schools contracts and vehicle inspections by SPT. This monitoring is 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 The table below gives further details of the free transport contracts arranged by SPT.

	Primary	Secondary	Total
No of Schools	84	24	108
No of Pupils	3490	6062	9552
No of Contracts*	125*	116*	223*

\* dual contracts involved

#### 2. Contract Monitoring.

- 2.1 Monitoring of schools contracts is undertaken on both a planned and reactive basis. Planned monitoring is a programme of checks on all contracts at least once during the school year. Where 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 about vehicles, arrangements are made to have the vehicles inspected by SPT's engineering inspectors.
- 2.2 The table below records the monitoring checks made on contracts in the April – June 2001 period.

	Primary	Secondary	Total
No of Contracts Checked	40	41	81
School Visits	37	12	49
Checks at Other Locations	11	20	31

#### 3. Vehicle Monitoring

- 3.1 Checks on vehicles are divided into operational checks undertaken by SPT's customer care inspectors and engineering checks undertaken by SPT's engineering inspectors.

Generally, operational checks are undertaken at schools whilst engineering checks are mainly 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.

- 3.2 The table below records the number and type of vehicle checks in the April – June 2001 period

	<b>Double Deck</b>	<b>Single Deck</b>	<b>Minibuses</b>	<b>Taxis</b>
Customer Care Inspections	46	50	7	6
Engineering Inspections	6	26	6	2

- 3.3 During the period covered by this report, one pre-contract inspection has been carried out on a bus operator, who had expressed an interest in becoming a contractor. During this inspection, a two single deck buses were examined.

#### **4. Specific Problems Investigated.**

- 4.1 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 correct problems. The following are examples.

- (a) Caldervale High School.

Following a complaint from the contractor for the Caldercruix run that the bus had been stoned, two customer care inspectors carried out observations. A number of youths were seen to throw missiles at the bus in Caldercruix. This incident was reported to the police.

- (b) Cumbernauld Primary School.

Complaints had been received that the bus from the Eastfield Cottages area was leaving early. A customer care inspector investigated. Observations showed that the bus did operate within the specified times.

- (c) Our Lady's High School, Cumbernauld.

A complaint was received that the bus serving the Cardowan area was arriving late and that it was being driven in an erratic manner. The inspector followed the bus discretely and found that the bus was being driven correctly and within the speed limits, it arrived at the school within the acceptable time band.

- (d) Our Lady's High School, Motherwell.

A complaint was received that the bus serving Forgewood was arriving at the school late in the mornings. A customer care inspector found that the bus arrived late at Forgewood and the contractor was issued with a formal warning letter. Further monitoring undertaken by the customer care inspectors showed that the bus was operating within the specified times. Further monitoring will be undertaken to ensure that the contractor complies with the contract specification.

(e) Plains Primary School.

Following complaints that the bus was late in the afternoons, a customer care inspector carried out observations and found that the bus was operating within the specified times.

(f) Sacred Heart Primary School, Bellshill.

Following a fire at the school in mid June, special arrangements were made to transport 318 pupils to Cardinal Newman High, Burnhead Primary School, and St. Brendan's Primary School. A customer care inspector was present on the first day of operation to ensure that there were no problems with the operation of the buses. The runs were timetabled so that the buses with the greatest distance to travel left the school first.

(g) Stane Primary School, Shotts.

There was a change of contractor at the beginning of the term and double deck buses were used. The parents of pupils refused to allow their children to use the transport because they are not fitted with seat belts. The delay meant that the vehicles were late for the runs for Calderhead High School.

## 5. Co-ordinated Monitoring Checks

5.1 SPT is continuing its initiative of simultaneous checks by the customer care inspectors and the 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.

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 further strengthen the checks carried out on operators.

## 6. Action Against Poor Performance

6.1 £1,740 was deducted from payments due to contractors for the period between 2 April 2001 to 29 June 2001 as a result of failure to meet contract specifications.

6.2 Details of contract cancellations are given in the following table.

<b>Contracts Cancelled due to Poor Performance by the Contractor</b>	<b>Contracts Cancelled by Contractors</b>	<b>Contracts Cancelled following the issue of Formal Warning Letters</b>
0	4	0

## **7. Financial Performance in 2000 - 2001**

- 7.1 The expenditure for 2000/2001 for home to school transport for primary and secondary pupils was £2,437,380 against a budget of £2,307,380. The overspend was therefore £130,000.

The overspend was largely the result of additional transport provision following the fires at Stane Primary School and Baird Memorial Primary School. The cost of transport for this will be recouped through insurance claims.

## **8. Recommendations**

The education resources sub-committee is recommended to:

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- (ii) request the submission of further performance reports to future meetings of the sub-committee.

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