

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM No. 5

REPORT

To: EDUCATION (RESOURCES) SUB COMMITTEE	Subject: SCHOOL TRANSPORT ARRANGED BY SPT: PERFORMANCE REVIEW
From: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION	
Date: APRIL 2004	Ref: MM/BB

**Summary**

This report reviews the mainstream transport contract for the period 20 October 2003 to 19 December 2003. 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:

- (i) to note the performance of the home to school transport contracts arranged by SPT for the period 20 October 2003 to 19 December 2003.
- (ii) to request the submission of a further performance review report to a future meeting of the sub-committee.

*Michael O'Neill*

Members wishing further information about this paper should contact

Michael O'Neill, Director of Education, on 01236 812336 or  
Murdo Maciver, Head of Educational Provision, on 01236 812269

## NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### School Transport arranged by SPT: Performance Review

#### Report by Director of Education

#### 1. Background.

1.1 This report covers the period 20 October 2003 to 19 December 2003 and covers the monitoring of schools contracts and the vehicle inspections carried out 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 and managed by SPT.

1.2 The table below gives further details of the free school transport contracts arranged by SPT.

	Primary	Secondary	Total
No of Schools	79	30	109
No of Pupils	3164	6219	9383
No of Contracts	117	118	211

\* 24 Dual contracts involved

#### 2. Monitoring.

2.1 Monitoring of schools contracts is undertaken on both a proactive and reactive basis. Pro-active monitoring is based on a programme of checks with the aim of checking all contracts at least once during the school year. However, where complaints are received, reactive 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.

The table below records the monitoring checks made on contracts during the year to date:

Monitoring Item	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools	Total
Number of checks at school	38	18	56
Number of contracts monitored	33	36	69
Number of schools with contracts monitored at locations other than at the school	3	8	11
Number of contracts monitored at locations other than at the school	4	12	16

### 3. Vehicle Monitoring.

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

Generally, operational checks are undertaken at schools whilst engineering checks are mainly conducted at operator 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 carried out during the period 20 October 2003 to 19 December 2003:

	Double Deck	Single Deck	Minibuses	Taxis
Customer care inspections	30	74	12	22
Engineering inspections	2	5	3	1

### 4. Pupils attending Schools outwith North Lanarkshire.

4.1 During the period under review, a number of pupils were transported from North Lanarkshire Council area to other local authority areas. The table below records details of the number of pupils, number of contracts and local authority area.

Council Area	No of Contracts	No of pupils transported
East Dunbartonshire	4	23
Glasgow City	1	1
South Lanarkshire	6	413

In the same period a number of pupils were transported to schools within North Lanarkshire from other local authorities, as detailed below:

<b>Council Area</b>	<b>No of Contracts</b>	<b>No of pupils transported</b>
East Dunbartonshire	7	378
Glasgow City	8	526
South Lanarkshire	6	413
North Ayrshire	1	1

**4.2** These contracts are included in the inspection process carried out by SPT customer care inspectors.

## **5. Specific Problems Investigated.**

**5.1** In addition to the routine monitoring of contracts, a number of specific problems were investigated and action taken to remedy the situation. The following are some examples:

### **(a) Airdrie Academy**

Following complaints regarding the timekeeping of the buses, monitoring was carried out by the Customer Care Inspectors and warning letters were issued to Jay Coach Travel Ltd, David Lowe, (t/a DC Minicoaches and Thomas Arthur (t/a Arthur's Coaches) in respect of early arrivals at the school.

A further complaint was received stating that the bus operated by Thomas Arthur from the Longriggend area was dropping pupils off in the morning on the wrong side of the road. A Customer Care inspector monitored the contract and found that the complaint was well founded. The contractor was issued with a warning letter and further monitoring indicated that this practice had stopped.

### **(b) Cumbernauld Primary School**

A complaint was received regarding the condition of the double deck and the single deck buses operated by Jay Coach Travel Ltd from the Cumbernauld Village and Westerwood areas. SPT's engineering Inspectors carried out a spot check and found that whilst the vehicles were shabby in appearance, they were generally maintained. However, a number of minor defects were found. The Customer Care Inspectors found that the vehicles were in reasonable condition internally.

### **(c) Sikeside Primary**

Following a complaint that the pupils on the bus operated by E Lindsay (T/a Lindsay of Coatbridge) were not wearing seatbelts, a Customer Care Inspector visited the school and spoke to the pupils on the bus, emphasising the need to wear seatbelts.

### **(d) St Barbara's Primary School, Muirhead**

Following further complaints regarding the bus operated by D.C Lowe from Gartcosh running late, more monitoring was undertaken by the Customer Care Inspectors. Given the continued failures of the contractor to meet the contract specification, the contract was terminated and a replacement contract awarded to James Lafferty. A Customer Care Inspector was on hand to monitor the change of contractor. The inspector found that the bus has to uplift pupils on the main road because it cannot use the turning area due to parents cars being parked there.

## **6. Co-ordinated Monitoring Checks.**

- 6.1** SPT continued its periodic co-operation with the Vehicle Operator Services Agency, Vehicle Inspectorate Division and Strathclyde Police, in joint checks on operators. These consolidate the checks carried out on operators.
- 6.2** The inspections aim to ensure that buses and other vehicles were roadworthy and that all requirements of the contracts were met. Vehicles are checked by Strathclyde Passenger Transport's customer care inspectors to ensure that the conditions of contract were complied with. The police check that the vehicles are being operated legally and are in a roadworthy condition.
- 6.3** The vehicles are also examined by the Vehicle Inspectorate's Vehicle Examiners, the Passenger Transport Executive's Engineering Inspectors, and specially trained police officers. All work to the same standards as the Vehicle Inspectorate. This results in vehicles being given a comprehensive "roadside" examination.
- 6.4** In the North Lanarkshire Council area, 3 vehicles were inspected during the period covered by this report.

6.5 The table below gives further details of these inspections.

No of Schools	No of Vehicles Inspected	No of Vehicles found to be in a satisfactory condition
1	3	2

The table below indicates the action taken against the remaining 4 vehicles which were not found to be in satisfactory condition.

Immediate Prohibitions	Delayed Prohibitions	Defect Notices
NIL	1	1

Defect notices allow the operator to remedy the defect. Provided this is done, no further action is taken.

## 7. Budget Performance

The budget allocation to meet mainstream transport costs in 2003/2004 was £2,980,317. Most recent projected outturn figures for this financial year suggest a final spend of £3,161,297. This spend covers the cost of mainstream school contract payments, temporary contract payments, S.P.T agency fees and advertising costs.

The resultant overspend is projected as £180,980. This overspend can be attributed to a number of factors, including:-

- additional contracts on safety grounds
- additional 2 school days transport required during financial year.

## 8. Action Against Poor Performance.

8.1 Warning letters may be issued to operators drawing attention to apparent breaches of the conditions of contract. Where the explanation is not acceptable deductions are made from payments, and the warning is recorded against the contractor.

If more than 4 warnings are issued in a 12 week period, or more than 6 warnings in a 12 month period the contract can be withdrawn.

During the period 20 October 2003 to 19 December 2003, a total of 69 warning letters were issued to contractors because of failure to meet the required performance. A total of 121 warning letters were rescinded after appeals by the operators. There were a further 6 appeals under consideration as at 19 December 2003, for which the outcome is not yet known.

8.2 £2,614.21 was deducted from payments due to contractors in the period 20 October 2003 to 19 December 2003. £1260.00 was deducted for failing to submit traffic returns timeously. A total of £1354.21 was deducted following the issue of a warning letter.

**8.3** During the period, 1 contract was cancelled due to being no longer required. One contract was cancelled due to poor performance by the contractor who was DC Lowe (T/a Lowe's Minibuses) on contract number 2062E to St Barbara's PS.

## **9. Recommendation**

The education (resources) sub committee is recommended:

- (i) to note the performance of the home to school transport contracts arranged by SPT for the period 20 October 2003 to 19 December 2003.
- (ii) to request the submission of a further performance review report to a future meeting of the sub-committee.