

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

Summary

This report reviews the mainstream transport contract for the period January 2004 to April 2004. 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 January 2004 to April 2004.
- (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

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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 5 January 2004 to 2 April 2004 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 by SPT meet the quality standards set by the Council.

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

	Primary	Secondary	Total
No of Schools	80	26	106
No of Pupils	3102	5427	8529
No of Contracts	134	117	215

* 36 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 about vehicles, arrangements are made to have the vehicles inspected by the executive's engineering inspectors.

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

Monitoring Item	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools	Total
Number of schools where checks have taken place	47	17	64
Number of contracts monitored	71	72	133*
Number of schools with contracts monitored at locations other than at the school	11	14	25
Number of contracts monitored at locations other than at the school	11	32	43

* includes dual contracts

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 5 January 2004 to 2 April 2004:

	Double Deck	Single Deck	Minibuses	Taxis
Customer care inspections	88	188	19	47
Engineering inspections	18	44	5	5

4. Pupils attending Schools outwith North Lanarkshire.

- 4.1 During the period under review, a number of pupils were transported from North Lanarkshire area to schools in other local authorities. The following table records the details.

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 in North Lanarkshire from other local authorities, as detailed below:

Council Area	No of Contracts	No of pupils transported
East Dunbartonshire	7	378
Glasgow City	8	526
South Lanarkshire	6	283
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) Clarkston Primary School, Airdrie

Following a complaint regarding the timekeeping of the bus from Gartness and Moffat Mills operated by J Duggan (T/a JD Travel) a Customer Care inspector monitored the contract and found that one of the buses on the contract arrived late, resulting in a warning letter being issued. Further monitoring showed that the buses were arriving just on time.

Following a complaint about a behavioural incident on the bus to Gartness, a Customer Care inspector visited the school and discussed the incident. A strategy was agreed with the school management and the local community police officer.

The pupils were all advised that SPT's Customer Care inspectors would be monitoring the contract. This monitoring has shown the pupils to be well behaved and the arrangements appear to be working well.

b) Cumbernauld High School

Following complaints that the buses operated by Dunn's Coaches to the Carrickstone and Dullater areas were overcrowded, the Customer Care inspectors found that the operator was providing sufficient capacity. Following further complaints, additional monitoring was undertaken and this showed that on one occasion, insufficient capacity was provided and a warning letter was issued.

c) Our Lady's High School, Cumbernauld

As a result of complaints in 2003-4 that the buses operated by First Glasgow from Millerston were overloaded, the contractor de-registered the journeys. They had been registered as local services to allow fare paying passengers to be carried. Consequently a substantial number of non-entitled pupils were travelling on the bus.

Monitoring of the buses by a Customer Care inspector showed that the buses were operating within the specified times, entitled pupils had been issued with passes and that there was sufficient capacity for those entitled to travel.

A complaint received that pupils travelling home on the Dunns coaches bus to Cardowan were leaving the vehicle via the emergency exit, was also investigated. Monitoring showed that the complaint was investigated and the matter was taken up with the contractor. Further monitoring will be carried out in the new term.

d) Plains Primary School

A complaint was received regarding the timekeeping of the taxi operated by W. Ashenhurst from Brownieside Farm, Customer Care inspectors found that the timekeeping was erratic and a number of warning letters were issued.

e) Rosehall High School

Following complaints about the timekeeping of the buses from Carnbroe operated by William Miller (T/a Millers Coaches) monitoring was undertaken both at the school and at Carnbroe. The Customer Care inspector found that the buses were operating within the specified times and that the required 3 vehicles were being supplied.

It was noted that whilst there is heavy traffic in this area, this did not appear to cause any problems and the buses have sufficient time to get to school.

f) St Margaret's High School, Airdrie

Following a complaint that pupils were smoking on the school buses, Customer Care inspectors spoke to all of the drivers and attendants. In the case of any smoking incident, they were instructed to identify the pupil to the school so that the school can take appropriate action. The drivers and attendants were all given a copy of the code of practice and the clause on smoking was drawn to their attention. The Customer Care inspectors also advised all pupils that they must not smoke on the bus.

g) Tollbrae Primary School

Following a complaint that the buses from the Cairnhill and Brownsburn areas operated by Alan MacPherson (T/a MacPhersons Luxury Travel) were arriving late at the school, monitoring by a Customer Care inspector upheld the complaints. A warning letter was issued and further monitoring showed that the buses were now operating within the specified times.

6. Co-ordinated Monitoring Checks.

- 6.1** SPT continued its active co-operation with the Vehicle Operator Services Agency, Vehicle Inspectorate Division and Strathclyde Police, in joint checks 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, 28 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
3	28	14

The table below indicates the action taken against the remaining 14 vehicles which were not found to be in satisfactory condition.

Immediate Prohibitions	Delayed Prohibitions	Defect Notices
2	2	9

Defect notices allow the operator to remedy the defect. Provided this is done, no further action is taken. One vehicle operator was reported to the procurator fiscal for not displaying an up to date tax disc.

7. Budget Performance

The budget allocation for mainstream transport in 2003/2004 was £2,980,317. The final outturn figures for the financial year was £3,191,629. 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 £211,312. This overspend is attributed to the following number of factors,

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

8. Action Against Poor Performance.

8.1 Warning letters are issued to operators following alleged 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 5 January 2004 to 2 April 2004, a total of 152 warning letters were issued to contractors because of failure to meet the required performance. A total of 33 warning letters were rescinded after appeal and at 2 April a further 6 appeals are under consideration.

8.2 £2,628.73 was deducted from payments due to contractors in the period 5 January to 2 April 2004 including £900 for failing to submit traffic returns timeously and £1728.73 following the issue of warning letters.

8.3 During the period, 1 contract was cancelled due to being no longer required.

Details of other contract cancellations are given in the following table:-

Contracts cancelled due to poor performance by the contractor	Contracts cancelled due to the contractor withdrawing	Contracts cancelled for other reasons	Contracts cancelled following the issue of formal warning letters
2	5	0	0

The cancelled contracts due to poor performance related to school contracts for Airdrie Academy and St Barbara's Primary School. Both contracts were operated by D C Lowe. The five contracts which were withdrawn relating to HAD coaches. Details of these contracts were reported to the education resources committee on 7 May 2004.

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 5 January 2004 to 2 April 2004.
- (ii) to request the submission of a further performance review report to a future meeting of the sub-committee.