

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

ITEM NO. 4

REPORT

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

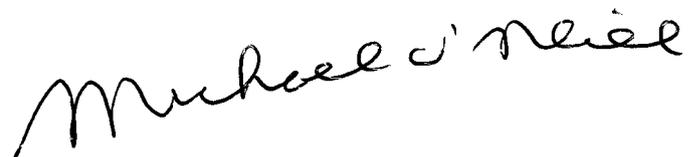
**Summary**

This report reviews the mainstream transport contract for the period 18 August 2003 to 25 June 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 18 August 2003 to 25 June 2004.
- (ii) to request the submission of a further performance review report to a future meeting of the sub-committee.



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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 school session 2003-2004 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 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.

	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Total</b>
No of Schools	80	25	105
No of Pupils	1952	4219	6171
No of Contracts	134	117	215

#### 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 schools where checks have taken place	62	22	84
Number of contracts monitored	98	113	211
Number of schools with contracts monitored at locations other than at the school	29	18	47
Number of contracts monitored at locations other than at the school	26	53	79

### 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 18 August 2003 to 25 June 2004:

	Double Deck	Single Deck	Minibuses	Taxis
Customer care inspections	207	418	625	137
Engineering inspections	32	76	17	17

### 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	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:

e) **Alexandra Primary School**

Following a complaint from another operator that the bus from the Cairnhill area operated by Millers was departing early, monitoring was undertaken by the customer care inspectors who found that the bus arrived late on 5 January. The inspector also found that the driver was not carrying any ID as required.

b) **Airdrie Academy**

Following a complaint that the bus operated by John McNairn from the Cairnhill area was departing early in the morning, monitoring was carried out by a customer care inspector. It was found that the bus had left a few minutes early on the first morning, but thereafter it departed within the specified time band.

After complaints regarding the timekeeping of the buses, particularly early arrival at the school, had been received, 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 was carried out that showed that this practice had stopped.

**c) Banton Primary School**

The contractor, Mrs Forrest, proposed to use a modified vehicle to which seatbelts had been fitted by a local garage. SPT sought certification that the seatbelt installation complied with current legislative requirements and until such time as that certification was forthcoming, the vehicle was prohibited from use. Monitoring was undertaken by the customer care inspectors to ensure that the vehicle was not being used.

**d) Calderhead High School**

Following complaints regarding the timekeeping and capacity being provided by HAD Coaches on the buses from Harthill and Eastfield, monitoring was carried out by the customer care inspectors. They found that the operator provided 2 double decks. However, owing to severe weather, buses were being delayed. One of the inspectors was approached by a pupil at Eastfield who asked if the bus that had just left was for Calderhead High. The inspector was of the opinion that the pupil has purposely missed bus as she appeared to be pleased that the school bus had gone.

Further monitoring at the uplift points in Harthill and Eastfield showed that the buses were operating within the specified times and that sufficient capacity was being provided.

Monitoring at the school in the afternoon showed that the contractor was meeting the contract specifications.

**e) Cathedral Primary School**

Following an incident in which a pupil on the bus operated by Stuart's Coaches from the Greenacres area was injured by a needle, the contractor was suspended from the contract. A letter was sent to all contractors reminding them of their responsibility to have vehicle cleaning arrangements that ensure that the interiors are kept clean and minimise any possible risk to passengers.

**f) Clarkston Primary School, Airdrie**

Following a complaint regarding the timekeeping of the bus form Gartness and Moffat Mills operated by J. Duggan (T/a J.D. 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. The other being on time. Further monitoring showed that the buses were arriving on time.

Following a complaint that a pupil had pushed another pupil down the entrance steps on the bus to Gartness, a customer care inspector visited the school and discussed the incident with the assistant head teacher. Also present was the local community police officer. The offending pupil had been made aware of the consequences of his actions and had been appointed "monitor" on the bus to help him be more responsible. The pupils were all advised that they must behave whilst travelling on the bus and that SPT's customer care inspectors would be monitoring the contract from time to time. This monitoring has shown the pupils to be well behaved and the arrangements appear to be working well.

During routine monitoring of the contract operated by J D Travel to the Gartness and Moffat Mills area, the customer care inspector noted that the vehicle was in a shabby condition. The head teacher advised that some parents had complained about the vehicle. Details were passed to SPT's engineering inspectors who subsequently examined the vehicle and found that the vehicle had insecure floor traps and an immediate prohibition was issued. The vehicle also had a number of minor defects and the contractor was issued with a warning letter in respect of the condition of the vehicle.

**L) Clyde Valley High School**

Following a complaint that pupils in Muirhouse waiting for the bus operated by Margaret McKindless (T/a McKindless Express)) were causing damage to a fence at the uplift point, monitoring was undertaken by a customer care inspector. It was found that the pupils travelling on the contract were uplifted from a different location and that the uplift point is actually at a bus stop used by fare paying pupils.

**I) Condorrat Primary School**

Following a complaint that the bus from the Moffat Mills area operated by Alan MacPherson (T/a MacPhersons Luxury Travel) was late in the mornings, a customer care inspector monitored the contract and found that the bus was operating with in the specified times. It was found that the pupils of the parent who complained arrived late at the pick up point.

**J) Cumbernauld High School**

Complaints were received that the buses operated by Dunn's coaches to the Carrickstone and Dullatur areas were overcrowded, monitoring was undertaken by the customer care inspectors who found that the contractor was providing sufficient capacity. Monitoring was undertaken on a number of occasions, both at the uplift/ set down points and at the school. Following further complaints, additional monitoring was undertaken and this showed that on one occasion, insufficient capacity was provided and a warning letter was issued.

Following a complaint that the bus operated by Dunn's Coaches to the Auchinkilns Holdings area was overloaded, a customer care inspector monitored the contract and found that the contractor was provided a 54 seat vehicle for a contract requirement of 50 seats. It was also noted that only 22 pupils were travelling.

**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. 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, 46 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
7	46	27

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
3	3	11

Defect notices allow the operator to remedy the defect. Provided this is done, no further action is taken. One vehicle was found to have an out of date tax disc and one was found to have defective reversing lights.

## **7. Budget Performance**

The budget allocation to meet mainstream transport costs for 2004/2005 is £3,075,003. The final outturn forecast for the financial year is £3,463,790. This spend covers the cost of mainstream school contract payments, temporary contract payments, S.P.T agency fees and advertising costs.

The projected overspend is £388,787.

## **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 18 August 2003 – 25 June 2004, a total of 393 warning letters were issued to contractors because of failure to meet the required performance. A total of 70 warning letters were rescinded after appeals by the operators.

**8.2** £103,25.26 was deducted from payments due to contractors in the period 18 August 2003 to 25 June 2004 including £3,810 for failing to submit traffic returns timeously. And £6,515.36 following the issue of a warning letter.

**8.3** During the period, 4 contracts were 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
0	6	3	1

The six contracts which were withdrawn relating to HAD coaches ceasing business. The contract cancelled following the issue of warning letters was operated by David Craig to St Barbaras PS. Of the contracts cancelled for other reasons, one was operated by Brian Cutmore (T/a A trip in time) and was cancelled due to the contractor having insufficient resources and failing to have Disclosure Scotland checks carried out on his drivers. The other two contracts were operated by DC Lowe and were cancelled due to the contractor having insufficient capacity, using a vehicle with an out of date tax disc and using a driver who had not been cleared through Disclosure Scotland.

## **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 18 August 2003 to 25 June 2004.
- (ii) to request the submission of a further performance review report to a future meeting of the sub-committee.