

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE 25 JANUARY 2000
PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY COMMITTEE 27 JANUARY 2000

SCHOOL TRANSPORT - BEST VALUE SERVICE REVIEW

JOINT REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND
THE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORT

ABSTRACT

This report outlines the findings of the recently completed Best Value Service Review on School Transport.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee and the Planning and Transport Policy Committee, each for its respective interests:

- a) notes the terms of this report and the contents of the Best Value Service Review on School Transport (copies of which are available in the Members' Lounge);
- b) approves the proposed improvement plan (Appendix);
- c) authorises the Director of Finance to alert the Scottish Executive to the swingeing cut planned for Angus Council's GAE for School Transport in future and to the very deep concerns that cut is causing in a rural area such as Angus.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members of both Committees will be aware that - as part of the government's Best Value initiative - all local authority services require to be reviewed over the period 1998 - 2003.
- 2.2 The review of School Transport has been undertaken as a joint exercise involving officers of both the Education Department and the Planning and Transport Department. The full report of the Review Team is available for perusal in the Members' Lounge.

3 KEY FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

- 3.1 The survey of parents and pupils indicates a generally high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the service.
- 3.2 The benchmarking information suggests that Angus Council appears to have taken more steps to address safety issues than several other Councils, and that value for money is being achieved relatively well.
- 3.3 There are specific issues requiring further consideration (eg the possible introduction of more flexible contractual arrangements in certain circumstances) and these are highlighted in the Improvement Plan (Appendix).

4 FINANCIAL ISSUES

- 4.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from approval of the Improvement Plan. However, full implementation of the plan is expected to result in modest financial savings in the medium term - the precise level of which cannot be accurately quantified in advance.
- 4.2 Financial information gleaned by the Review Team suggests strongly that the School Transport service in Angus is reasonably cost effective compared to other Scottish education authorities. Notwithstanding Angus' relatively favourable position, total expenditure on School Transport (including indirect costs related to the administration of what is a complex service) has been running above GAE in recent years.
- 4.3 Expenditure on School Transport in recent years is summarised below:

	£ 000s	GAE
98/99	1481*	1398
99/00	1576*	1404
(projected) 00/01	1626*	889

*includes indirect costs

- 4.4 The increases in expenditure year on year relate mainly to inflation linked charges by contractors, and the Improvement Plan suggests ways in which some of this could possibly be off-set in future by more flexible contractual arrangements. However the attention of members is drawn to the swingeing cut in GAE for School Transport which the Council is having imposed on it for 2000/2001. It is understood that the Scottish Executive has decided to adopt a different methodology for assessing GAE for School Transport, and that this new methodology will benefit urban authorities (relatively speaking) at the expense of rural authorities. Although the Scottish Executive will dampen the effect of this change over a three year period which will be of some assistance in the short term, the long-term implications pose serious concerns.
- 4.5 Given the information gleaned from the Service Review , and given also current levels of expenditure in Angus on School Transport, this cut in GAE is alarming. It is therefore proposed that the Director of Finance be authorised to raise concerns about this matter with the Scottish Executive.

5 CONSULTATION

In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council, this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and the Director of Law & Administration.

JIM ANDERSON
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ALEX ANDERSON
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & TRANSPORT

Appendix

NOTE: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

JAA/RB

SCHOOL TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENT PLAN	
	Timescale
Customer Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design Parental Information Leaflets • Issue to Parents • Encourage parents to provide feedback on service 	Completed January 2000 Ongoing
Safety Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare Generic Risk Assessment for School Transport • Issue to Head Teachers • Response and assessment of response 	Completed Completed Ongoing
Contract Monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop procedure for schools and contractors • Distribute to schools and contractors • Amend central monitoring arrangements 	Completed January 2000 April 2000
Administrative Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Transport Policy and Procedures Document • Update Admin Manual 	Completed October 1999
Benchmarking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop benchmarks in association with other Local Authorities. 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On a pilot basis, invite contracts to tender on 3 and 4 year basis • Amend contract documentation for SEN to allow for change in circumstances • Consider the Introduction of financial set-off for poor performance 	April 2000 August 2000 December 2000
Management Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal record of contract monitoring to be amended • Use ICT to make more effective use of information available • Undertake a process mapping exercise to improve the flow of information • Work towards integrating management information systems • Improve available information, eg. length of each route • Monitor the number of pupils on each route receiving transport on safety grounds. 	March 2000 April 2000 August 2000 Ongoing August 2000 Ongoing
Service Vehicles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wherever possible school contract vehicles should be registered for public transport. • Transport team to carefully consider integration of existing subsidised service vehicles with school transport. • Amend tendering arrangements as outlined in Section 6.5 	Ongoing Ongoing August 2000
Safe Routes to School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up Working Group on options available to improve routes to schools. • Thereafter undertake works/implement new working arrangements. • Develop 3 year planned programme of works • Clarify criteria for providing transport on safety grounds 	February 2000 August-October 2000 December 2000 January 2000

