

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Chief Education Officer

Education Services Committee: 22 September 2021

Subject: School Transport Contracts - Session 2021/22

1. Purpose

1.1 This report is to provide an update on the steps taken to secure school transport contracts in liaison with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) for mainstream school transport and the Corporate Procurement Unit for Additional Support Needs (ASN) school transport from school session 2021/2022 until 2024/2025.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that:

- (i) Members note the necessary arrangements in liaison with SPT for renewed mainstream school transport contracts for session 2021/2022;
- (ii) Members note that in consultation with the Corporate Procurement Unit, a Corporate Taxis Services framework has been approved for a maximum period of four years. All ASN transport will be procured via this framework for the duration of this period;

3. Background

3.1 The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 requires Education Authorities to make appropriate provision to assist pupils with accessing education. The Act requires that free transport be provided for all pupils up to the age of 8 who live more than 2 miles from their local school and to pupils over the age of 8 who live more than 3 miles from their local school.

3.2 The policy presently operated by West Dunbartonshire Council provides free home-to-school transport for primary school children who live more than 1 mile from their local school and for secondary school children who live more than 2 miles from their local school.

3.3 The Education Authority is also required to make provision for pupils with Additional Support Needs to attend a school to meet the requirements of their needs.

3.4 In order to secure contracts for session 2021/2022 and beyond, it was necessary to begin the process as timetabled below.

4. Main Issues

4.1 In order to address the Council's requirements, the following timescales were followed:

- (i) March 2021 – Educational Services Committee of 10 March 2021, Members approved to proceed with the necessary arrangements to secure tenders for Mainstream and Additional Support Needs (ASN) school transport;
- (ii) March 2021 - The Chief Education Officer was authorised to make the necessary arrangements in liaison with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) to renew any mainstream contracts for session 2021/2022 to 2025/26; as necessary;
- (iii) April 2021 – SPT recommended that 5 mainstream contracts at a total value of £113k were extended for one further year (due to the impact of the pandemic on procurement powers and timescales). May 2021 - the Chief Education Officer in liaison with the Chief Officer, Regulatory and Regeneration and Corporate Procurement Unit authorised SPT to extend the 5 mainstream contracts for one further year.
- (iv) As part of the best value work of the council, a framework was created for local transport providers to streamline and improve the process of advertising and awarding tenders across multiple service areas. Due to the pandemic causing uncertainty with which ASN routes that will be required and clarifying the level of Covid safety measures needed, along with fragility of the transport market available to undertake the ASN routes, the development of this framework took longer than anticipated, which delayed the timeframe to advertise and award contracts for ASN school transport in time for schools returning in August.

4.2 Members will be aware that budget spend in respect of mainstream school contracts procured by SPT as agent for West Dunbartonshire Council and ASN school transport contracts is reported to full Council for approval.

5. People Implications

5.1 There are no people implications related to this report.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

6.1 Based on the current transport service requirements, the anticipated spend was agreed by council. All spend within the contract will be subject to tender procedures as part of SPT's Dynamic Purchasing System and Corporate Taxi Services framework.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 There is no identified risk to the service in relation to this issue following timescales being met.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out, with no negative impacts identified.

9. Consultation

9.1 Legal, Democratic and Regulatory Services and Section 95 Officer have been consulted on the content of this paper.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 High quality school transport contracts contribute to the Council's strategic priority of delivering efficient and effective frontline services that improve the everyday lives of residents.

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Appendices: None

Background Papers: EIA screening

Wards Affected: All

