

ITEM No ...6.....

REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE – 24 JANUARY 2022

REPORT ON: AWARD OF SCHOOL BUS SERVICES CONTRACT

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

REPORT NO: 35-2022

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report provides details of a procurement exercise completed for the provision of school bus services.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the award of a contract to Tayside Public Transport Company Ltd (t/a Xplore Dundee) to provide seven discrete school day bus services.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The annual cost of providing a network of school buses is £132,846 which will be met from the Children and Families Services revenue budget.

4 BACKGROUND

4.1 School transport is provided for pupils with additional support needs and mainstream pupils who live a significant distance from their catchment secondary school. The Council utilises a combination of taxis, minibuses and large buses to deliver these services. In 2016 Dundee City Council adopted a 'school bus route and season ticket package' approach to enable a flexible solution to school transport needs.

4.2 The consolidation of the secondary school estate and historic merger of schools has increased the distance that some pupils travel to school. A commitment was given to ensure that pupils could easily access these schools, and corresponding bus services were developed to provide direct links to schools, such as Charleston to Harris Academy and Douglas to St Paul's Academy. More recently, a bus link has been established between Dykes of Gray and Baldragon Academy.

4.3 Council policy is that secondary school aged pupils are entitled to free school transport if they live more than 3 miles from their catchment school or live more than 2 miles from their catchment school and are in receipt of free school meals.

4.4 The Scottish Government is to introduce a free bus travel concession scheme for all persons under the age of 22 on 31 January 2022. This is expected to increase the numbers of pupils using buses at peak times and will put additional pressure on the commercial network if no additional capacity is available. Although bus operators will be reimbursed for all trips made by passengers covered by the new scheme, it is noted that the level of reimbursement is unlikely to meet the full costs of operating additional peak time school bus services. To ensure that suitable school bus services are available, additional financial support from the Council is required to meet the shortfall between income generated and operating costs.

4.5 The Council has historically supported the operation of a network of school bus services to ensure its statutory responsibilities are met and improve general access to school for non-entitled pupils. The introduction of free bus travel for Under 22s was anticipated to have a critical impact on the existing school bus routes and season tickets contract that had been in effect since 2016. Consequently, it was considered that a new contract was required to replace the existing arrangements and a procurement exercise was completed in December 2021.

5 TENDER OUTCOME

- 5.1 The commercial bus network does not have capacity to convey all the pupils that require to travel to school at peak times. It is therefore deemed necessary to enhance the commercial network with additional services that provide direct links to schools, operated to coincide with school start and finish times and provide extra seating capacity. Council officers identified seven routes where a direct bus link was considered necessary. These routes broadly follow the same seven routes currently operated:

Service 1: Whitfield - Fintry - St Paul's Academy
Service 2: Douglas - Linlathen - St Paul's Academy
Service 3: Dykes of Gray - Ardler - St Marys - Baldragon Academy and St Paul's Academy
Service 4: Dryburgh - Menzieshill - Harris Academy
Service 5: The Glens - Charleston - Harris Academy
Service 6: Charleston - Pentland - Harris Academy
Service 7: Gowrie Park- Menzieshill - Harris Academy

- 5.2 The contract for the operation of the seven routes is to take effect from 28 February 2022 and will continue until the end of the summer term on 30 June 2023. There is an option to extend annually for a maximum of two further years if both parties are agreeable.
- 5.3 A compliant tender submission was received from Xplore Dundee at a combined annual value of £132,846. There were no other competent submissions.

6 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This report has been subject of an assessment of any impacts on Equality and Diversity, Fairness and Poverty, Environment and Corporate Risk. There are no major issues.

7 CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 The Council Management Team has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None.

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JB/KAS

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