



## Notice of meeting of

### Education Scrutiny Committee

**To:** Councillors Hall (Chair), Bartlett, Bradley, D'Agorne,  
Jones, Kind and Livesley (Vice-Chair)

Co-opted Statutory Members:

Mr John Bailey (Parent Governor Representative)  
Mr Andy Lawton (Parent Governor Representative)  
Dr David Sellick (Church of England Representative) and  
Miss C Duffy (Catholic Representative)

**Date:** Wednesday, 6 December 2006

**Time:** 5.00 pm

**Venue:** The Guildhall, York

### AGENDA

#### 1. **Declarations of Interest** (Pages 1 - 2)

At this point Members are asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they may have in the business on this agenda. A list of general personal interests previously declared are attached.

#### 2. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 6)

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2006.

#### 3. **Public Participation**

At this point in the meeting members of the public who have registered their wish to speak regarding an item on the agenda or an issue within the Panel's remit can do so. Anyone who wishes to register or requires further information is requested to contact the Democracy Officer on the contact details listed at the foot of this agenda. The deadline for registering is Tuesday 5 December 2006 at 10.00am.

#### **4. Scrutiny Review on Home to School Bus Contracts (Pages 7 - 10)**

This report is to update members on progress on their scrutiny topic examining the contract school bus service and to consider their programme of work for the duration of this review.

#### **5. Urgent Business**

Any other business which the Chair considers urgent under the Local Government Act 1972.

#### Democracy Officer:

Name: Jill Pickering

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- E-mail – [jill.pickering@york.gov.uk](mailto:jill.pickering@york.gov.uk)

For more information about any of the following please contact the Democracy Officer responsible for servicing this meeting

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports

Contact details are set out above.

**EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Agenda item I: Declarations of interest.**

Please state any amendments you have to your declarations of interest:

Councillor Aspden – Governor Knavesmire Primary School, member of the National Union of Teachers and employee of Norton College.

Councillor Bartlett – Governor of Millthorpe and St Paul’s CE Primary School  
Councillor Blanchard – Chair of Young Enterprise  
Councillor Bradley – Governor of Poppleton Ousebank School and son attends Manor CE School

Councillor D’Agorne – Governor of Fishergate School and employee of York College

Councillor Kind – Governor of Burnholme Community College; Haxby Road Primary School

Councillor Livesley – Governor of Bishopthorpe Infant School.

Co-opted statutory members

Dr D Sellick – Governor of Derwent Infant and Junior School  
Mr A Lawton – Governor of Canon Lee School  
Mr J Bailey – Governor of Huntington School

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City of York Council

Minutes

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MEETING	EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	31 OCTOBER 2006
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS HALL (CHAIR), BARTLETT, BRADLEY, D'AGORNE, KIND AND LIVESLEY (VICE-CHAIR) DR D SELICK (CHURCH OF ENGLAND REPRESENTATIVE)
APOLOGIES	MR J BAILEY (PARENT GOVERNOR REPRESENTATIVE AND MS C DUFFY (CATHOLIC REPRESENTATIVE)

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### 9. Declarations of Interest

The following Members declared a general personal interest in the business on the agenda and requested their addition to the standing list of declarations for the Committee:

Councillor D'Agorne – Governor of Fishergate School and employee of York College

Councillor Bradley – Son attends Manor C of E School

### 10. Minutes

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2006 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### 11. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

### 12. Education Scrutiny Work Planning

Consideration was given to a report, which asked Members to consider their programme of work for the rest of the 2006/07 municipal year. The two scrutiny topics registered, which were relevant to the work of the Committee, were:

- a) The role of school governors, registered by Cllr Viv Kind in May 2005 (Topic no 127)
- b) Contract school bus services registered by Cllr Charles Hall in August 2006 (Topic no 141).

Members had met informally on 12 September 2006 to make recommendations as to the work programme and it was recommended that the Committee review the contract school bus services from now until the end of January 2007 in the first instance.

Mark Ellis from the Education Access Team gave Members a presentation on Home to School Transport which detailed the current law, the City of York Council's policies, the numbers of pupils requiring the service and costs. The areas which it was thought required further consideration were:

- Seat belts on buses
- CRB check for all drivers/escorts
- Behaviour on school buses
- Escort/Driver training for SEN Transport
- Pupils on public service routes (use of yellow buses)

Members were updated that the Education and Inspection Bill 2005, which was published earlier in the year, gave more entitlement to transport to those families on low incomes to enable them to have more choice of school and introduced school travel pathfinders.

In answer to questions Officers also confirmed that there were significant year on year increases in home to school transport costs above inflation which was a cause for concern. It was explained that bids for authorities wishing to become School Travel Pathfinders were required by February/March 2007. Pathfinder authorities would start in September 2009 with a formal evaluation in January 2012. Officers stated that, if it was decided that the authority should make a bid, then details of each schools travel plan would be required including an audit of how each child travelled at present and a strategy to influence their future method of travel.

Terry Walker from Transport Planning, City Strategy indicated that, at present, three year contracts had usually been offered to suppliers to enable the authority to adjust capacity as necessary but it was felt that the shorter the contract the less investment in transport would be made by contractors. He acknowledged that more modern vehicles were likely to have more and better safety features built into their design. It was confirmed that, of the 10 suppliers contracted to supply home to school transport services, at least four undertook CRB checks of their drivers. He also pointed out that his department had worked closely with neighbouring authorities over the years and had shared transport services, where appropriate, to obtain best value for money. In answer to questions he stated that yellow buses had been introduced by local authorities in both rural and urban areas around the country, which included West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority.

Members raised the following points

- Use of transport for school visits, trips and holiday clubs
- Complex issues when there were 6 suppliers transporting to one school

- Need to examine the possibility of offering longer transport contracts to allow providers with continuity to enable them to consider purchasing newer vehicles
- Questioned ideal length of any new contracts offered to suppliers of transport services
- Whether seat belts were mandatory on school transport vehicles and the need to examine the costs of providing belts for all children using these vehicles
- Noted that some authorities used the dedicated “yellow buses” for school transport but it was recognised that this was not a cheap option and that they were usually underwritten by funding for a particular project.

In answer to questions regarding the scrutiny topic registered on the role of school governors, Officers confirmed that the governance service was a small, tight unit, which still had little capacity for undertaking additional work. It was reported that three new Clerks had only just been appointed, the equivalent of 50% of the workforce, and that the Service Manager was at present off work. Members confirmed that running two topics concurrently would not be ideal.

Councillor Bradley confirmed that information on the role changes for school governors would be presented to a future meeting of the Children’s Services EMAP.

Officers confirmed that the scope of the remit would be amended in line with the Committees resolution.

Following further discussion on how to progress the registered topics it was

- RESOLVED:**
- i) That in the first instance the Committee undertake the registered topic on the contract school bus services registered by Cllr Charles Hall.
  - ii) That representatives from other authorities, including authorities that have introduced dedicated “yellow buses”, be invited to speak to Members to explain how they introduced their contract school bus services, including CRB checks and how they educated children to wear seatbelts.
  - iii) That the remit for topic no 141 – Contract School Bus Service marked as Annex E to the report be approved.
  - iv) That scrutiny topic no 127 on the role of school governors be undertaken by the Committee on the completion of topic no 141, in approximately February 2007.

CLLR C HALL, CHAIR

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.20 pm.





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**Education Scrutiny Committee****6 December 2006****Report of the Head of Civic, Democratic and Legal Services****Scrutiny review on home-to-school bus contracts.****Summary**

1. This report is to update members on progress on their scrutiny topic examining the contract school bus service and to consider their programme of work for the duration of this review.

**Background**

2. At the meeting of 31 October members agreed to examine the home-to-school bus service delivered by contractors, focussing on services to primary schools in York.
3. Members expect to make recommendations which will improve the safety of the transport service to and from primary schools.
4. They will examine the implications of requiring contractors to fit seat belts on all buses carrying children to primary schools. They will also consider the implications of requiring police checks on all drivers of primary school buses.
5. On 27 November representatives of this Committee visited Top Line Travel of York, an existing contractor for school transport and will be able to report back to this meeting. They were expecting to discuss Top Line Travel's views on the following issues:
  - a. What are their thoughts about introducing seat belts on all home to school services?
  - b. What would be the implications for contractors if this was introduced?
  - c. If they have any buses with seatbelts and if so if the children wear them. If they did fit seatbelts on all buses how could it be ensured that the pupils wore them?
  - d. Do they have any concerns about the safety of school transport and if so how could this be improved?
  - e. Do they CRB check all drivers on home-to-school buses?
  - f. What would be the implications for contractors if it became compulsory for all drivers to have a CRB check before they could work on home-to-school buses?

- g. Would extending the contracts to 5 years improve the quality of the service that contractors could offer City of York Council?
  - h. Have they seen a deterioration of the behaviour of pupils on buses since they have been a contractor?
6. It is expected that George Peach, the Regional Manager of the Confederation of Passenger Transport, Yorkshire Region and James Crook-Williamson of Alpha Bus and Coach of Hull (a new contractor for CYC) will also attend this meeting to give their views on the above points and will answer members questions.
  7. Nigel Rowe of East Riding of Yorkshire Council has also been invited to attend this meeting to discuss the introduction of safety measures on school transport within his local authority.
  8. Members are also interested in exploring the idea of dedicated school buses being introduced (as in the yellow buses used in the USA), but it is recognised that where these have been introduced it is often as a result of government funding for a particular project and over several local authorities. Members are hoping to investigate if a similar service has been introduced by an authority whose circumstances are more similar to York's.

### **Options**

9. Members may wish to question the witnesses attending this meeting to assist them in gathering information for this review.
10. Having questioned the witnesses, Members may then wish to consider the next stages of the work programme for this review and agree appropriate actions and timescales.

### **Analysis**

11. Members should be able gain some knowledge of the school transport service from the point of view of contractors and learn about their priorities and problems. They should also be able to learn about the situation in a neighbouring local authority and decide if they wish to hear from any others.

### **Corporate Priorities**

12. Fits with Corporate Priority no 8 - Improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the city.

### **Implications**

13. There are no known Financial, HR, Equalities, Legal, Crime and Disorder, IT or other implications at this stage.

## Risk Management

14. In compliance with the Councils risk management strategy. There are no risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

## Recommendations

15. Members are asked to receive the information presented by the witnesses at this meeting.
16. Members are asked to agree their workplan for the remainder of this scrutiny topic, including specific actions and timescales.

Reason: In order to carry out their responsibilities in managing the Education Scrutiny function in York.

## Contact Details

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**Chief Officer Responsible for the report:**

Suzan Hemingway  
Head of Civic, Democratic and Legal Services

**Report Approved**

**Date** 28.11.06

**Specialist Implications Officer(s)** *List information for all**Implication ie Financial**Name**Title**Tel No.**Implication ie Legal**Name**Title**Tel No.*

**Wards Affected:** *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

**All**

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

## Annexes

None

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