

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

Author:

Barbara Boyce
Scrutiny Officer
01904 551714
barbara.boyce@york.gov.uk

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