

## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

**Report to:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016  
**Report for:** Consideration  
**Report of:** Executive Member Children's Services

### Report Title

Executive Response: Home to School Transport – Task and Finish Group

### Summary

As Executive Member Children's Services I welcome the report of the Home to School Transport – Task and Finish Group. I would like to thank the members of the topic group for a thorough and well balanced report that carefully considered a number of complex issues.

I accept the recommendations set out in the report and requested that officers review those recommendations with immediate effect to see how they can inform our practice. I provided an update below against each of the recommendations.

### Recommendations

**Recommendation 1 – Journey times impacted by buses queuing at schools**  
The executive member should look at the broad financial impact of contractors extending the journey time through long waits at schools and additionally, work with schools and parents/carers to explore reducing such occurrences where there are not valid logistical reasons.

*Trafford Transport Co-ordination Unit is working with schools to try and ensure a reduction in buses queuing at schools within the logistical restrictions. All runs are commissioned based on an efficient use of resources and pick up times agreed to enable children to arrive at school at an appropriate time.*

**Recommendation 2 – Releasing Information at Tender**  
Scrutiny felt that there was scope for exploring with Trafford Parents Forum the potential for a protocol to be devised that protected the child's details, but allowed the parent/carer to permit release, where they felt those details were important to the tender process. It was felt to be an issue upon which there could be co-production with Trafford Parents Forum.

*Substantial engagement was undertaken through the Trafford Parents Forum for the retendering of transport runs for the 2015/16 academic year. The transition in September went very well and feedback has been positive on the revised approach.*

### Recommendation 3 – Clarifying DBS responsibility

Since Scrutiny has found ambiguity in the statutory guidance, and has learned through the press of a nearby council recording DBS checks of drivers, it recommends obtaining definitive guidance from the DfE on this point.

*It has not been possible to obtain 'definitive guidance from DfE' who do not specify requirements in relation to DBS checks for drivers. However legal advice is clear that Trafford's approach is appropriate and it is in line with our requirements of all external contractors working with children and young people. It should be noted that passenger assistants employed by the Council and subject to Council employment checks are present on each of the transport runs with vulnerable children and young people and drivers are not travelling alone with pupils.*

### Recommendation 4 – Safeguarding Information to Parents

Scrutiny endorses the point made by Trafford Parent's Forum that parents and carers should be informed of the responsible person for safeguarding within the operator's organisation.

*This recommendation is accepted.*

### Recommendation 5 – Risk Assessment

Scrutiny has seen Birmingham City Council's generic risk assessment for Home to School Transport and believes overall that such a risk assessment enhances the assurance parents/carers feel in using the service and recommends a similar model is used in Trafford.

*A generic risk assessment similar to that referenced from Birmingham City Council has been implemented.*

### Recommendation 6 – Training

It is therefore recommended that the training requirements be revisited to ensure consistency within the delivery of this, e.g. clarity within written materials etc., and checking that all aspects defined within the statutory guidance are covered and delivered appropriately

*A full review of training has been undertaken to develop a workforce development programme encompassing all aspects defined within the statutory guidance.*

### Recommendation 7

Trafford explores the feasibility of co-production of policy with Trafford Parents Forum.

*A revised Travel Assistance Policy is currently subject to consultation up to 2<sup>nd</sup> February and was subjected to extensive input from the Trafford Parents Forum.*

### Recommendation 8

The most consistent call was for improved communications with parent/carers – early notice of changes. There had also been times at Trafford when there'd been a lack of empathy when the call was first answered, for the parent/carer's predicament.

*Whilst feedback suggest there has been a substantial improvement in communication with parents/carers this is an area that requires further work to ensure that all communication is appropriate and officers are empathetic in their discussions with parents.*

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