

**From: Mr Roger Gough, Cabinet Member – Education and Health Reform**

**Mr Patrick Leeson – Corporate Director – Education and Young People’s Services**

**To: Education and Young People’s Services Cabinet Committee - 18 September 2015**

**Subject: Procurement of SEN Transport provision for Phase 1 Schools**

Key decision – Expenditure or savings of > £1m – including if over several phases. Procurement for Phase 1 is expected to be over £1m, with total procurement of all Phases approximately £20m.

Classification: **Unrestricted**

**Past Pathway of Paper:** None

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Cabinet Member for Decision

**Summary:** There is an opportunity to improve the quality and experience of learners accessing Special schools whilst reducing the cost to the local authority. This report seeks Cabinet Committee endorsement for the award of contracts for the provision of Special Educational Needs (SEN) Transport into three schools (identified as Phase 1) following a competitive tender process and in accordance with chosen evaluation methodology stated in published Invitation to Tender. The decision will encompass both the award for the initial contract term of three years, and if required for any of the two potential extensions that may be invoked.

Members are advised that there will be no changes to transport policy or the entitlement of individual students as a result to endorsing this approach to procurement.

**Recommendation:**

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the decision for the award of contracts for SEN Transport Provision in Phase 1 following completion of the procurement process for the provision of SEN Transport provision on a single school basis.

**1. Introduction**

1.1 SEN Transport is currently procured on a route by route basis. This report seeks to introduce whole school contract awards so quality and consistency can be improved whilst generating cost savings as contracts centre around a single school site.

- 1.2 KCC provides home to school transport for students with special educational needs (SEN). In 2015/15 the council spend circa £20m on the provision of such transport, transporting 4000+ students to over 100 establishments, through the letting of over 1300 contracts.
- 1.3 SEN Transport was selected as one of the Phase 2 reviews of the Facing The Challenge Transformation programme. In May 2015, the Outline Business Case presented a number of opportunities for consideration, and it was agreed (TAG 03/03/15) that a small number of schools (up to four) would be selected to pilot the opportunities around route optimisation and procurement to test viability.
- 1.4 There is no intention to review transport policy or pupil eligibility assessments as current policy reflects best practice nationally.
- 1.5 Three schools were identified and agreed, and have been working closely with both Public Transport and EYPS to ensure the needs of their pupils continue to be considered whilst delivering an improved service for children, parents and schools.

## **2. Body of the report**

- 2.1 SEN Transport is currently procured on a route by route basis, with the Eligibility team within EYPS (Fair Access) passing on to Public Transport the requirement for SEN pupil transport.
- 2.2 This procurement supports the existing SEN Transport Policy. There is no change to any policy or eligibility criteria.
- 2.3 Route optimisation is assessed by the Transport Planning team on a four year cycle (based on current route procurement). By using GIS and working alongside the schools to ensure pupils needs continue to be met, new routes have been identified into the three Phase 1 schools which reduce vehicle numbers whilst maintaining (or reducing where possible) journey times. It is important to note that route optimisation outputs are endorsed by the school, to ensure that childrens needs are continued to be met.
- 2.4 The new procurement for Phase 1 will not be on a route by route basis but will be based on a whole school network, with a single provider for each school. This is a step change in the delivery of SEN Transport and the council is seeking to work with the market, to develop new service standards and improved value for money.
- 2.5 The project is seeking to achieve multiple benefits including potential financial savings for the local authority, as well as improvements to service and consistency for both schools and families by providing a single accountable provider per school.
- 2.6 Contractual compliance will still be critical to any award, and Public Transport will continue to monitor compliance during the life of the contract.

- 2.7 This procurement includes a series of market briefings and engagement to support local Kent business in continuing to engage our SEN Transport provision
- 2.8 The schools in scope for Phase 1 are: St Nicholas School, Ifield School and Grange Park School, including any associated colleges and units.
- 2.9 It is recognised that communication to parents and schools is critical in the success of this project.
- 2.10 The headteachers at the schools in scope have been engaged, and are clear on the project, its aims and the plan for delivery. The schools have been working closely with Public Transport to ensure that route optimisation work takes into account the needs of their pupils, and all have been asked to endorse any changes made, to ensure that they are clear and supportive of changes made to individual routes. A presentation has been given to the Kent Association of Special Schools, and ongoing face to face meetings are planned with the schools throughout the procurement process and to ensure that contract mobilisation supports the schools through any changes to service provision.
- 2.11 Each school has also supported parent communications, with joint letters being sent to all affected parents (distributed via the schools). A specific email address and telephone number have been set up for parents to contact public transport to discuss any changes to their provision. The schools have also invited the Public Transport team to attend parents evenings, and the team have attended summer parents evenings at the three schools. They will also be attending parents evenings in September, and will be following up initial letters with parents to ensure communication is consistent and constant throughout the procurement process.
- 2.12 An extended mobilisation period has been allowed for in the implementation plan, to ensure that new operators are given the opportunity to meet with both schools and parents. The mobilisation plan will be worked up jointly with the schools to ensure a joined up approach to managing the contractor.
- 2.13 It is envisaged that the new contract award will take place following the Easter holidays, April 2016.

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The proposed contract spend across these three schools will be over £1m. The current cost of SEN Transport provision into these schools is £2million. New contracts will be awarded on a three year basis, with a two year extension period.
- 3.2 There is potential to secure financial savings through these new contracts, whilst improving the quality of service to families.

### **4. Legal implications**

- 4.1 A transparent and accountable procurement process will be used to select the providers. Legal will be engaged alongside the procurement team to support the

contract award.

## **5. Equalities implications**

- 5.1 Please refer to the EQIA initial assessment.
- 5.2 There is no change to any policy or eligibility criteria.

## **6. Other corporate implications**

- 6.1 This procurement has implications on both EYPS in terms of any financial impact it may have, and Growth, Environment & Transport in terms of service delivery.

## **7. Governance**

- 7.1 The Corporate Director for Education and Young People's Services will be the delegated officer under the Officer Scheme of Delegation.

## **8. Conclusions**

- 8.1 A robust procurement process is being undertaken to identify providers for a single provider school contract for SEN Transport provision. There is potential to secure financial savings through the new contract and ensure that the needs of vulnerable children continue to be met by the local authority.

## **9. Recommendation:**

- 9.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the decision for the award of contracts for SEN Transport Provision in Phase 1 following completion of the procurement process for the provision of SEN Transport provision on a single school basis.

## **10. Background Documents**

- 10.1 FED list submission

## **11. Contact details**

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