

Report to Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

11 January 2022

Subject:	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Passenger Transport Contract Update
Director:	Simone Hines Director of Finance
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1 Recommendation

1.1 That the Committee reviews and comments upon the following:

- The recommendations from the June 2021 internal review of the SEND Passenger Transport Contract.
- The recommendations from the Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review, Key Line of Enquiry 04 relating to SEND transport.
- The observations from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee following his fact-finding exercise.

2 Reasons for Recommendation

2.1 To be informed of the findings and recommendations from the June 2021 internal audit review of the SEND Passenger Transport Contract, the Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review - Key Line of Enquiry 04 relating to SEND transport, and the observations from the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee following his fact-finding exercise.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

- 3.1 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee is a key component of the council's governance, risk management and internal control framework.

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Following a number of concerns raised through various routes regarding the 2021 SEND Passenger Transport Contract exercise, a series of different reviews and actions have been undertaken.
- 4.2 An initial internal audit review, supported by senior officers from across the Council, into the background and decision making regarding the proposed award of the SEND Passenger Transport Contracts for 2021-25 was completed and a report issued.
- 4.3 One of the Key Lines of Enquiry (04) from the recent Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review was in regard to the SEND transport arrangements, following which they have made a number of recommendations.
- 4.4 As part of this Key Line of Enquiry, Grant Thornton noted that the Council had sought to commission an independent review of the original procurement. This review planned to assess the compliance and probity of the original procurement, including re-running the evaluation stage. However, this did not proceed due to there being only one bidder, and the cost being deemed not best value.
- 4.5 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee also undertook his own separate fact-finding exercise on the SEND transport arrangements, and has made a series of observations.
- 4.6 A report by the Director of Children and Education on the future SEND Transport arrangements is to be presented to the Cabinet on 12 January 2022.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The purpose of the report is to inform the Committee of the outcome of a number of reviews into the SEND Passenger Transport Contract arrangements. As such, there is no alternative option.

6 Implications

Resources:	There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.
Legal and Governance:	The council is not obliged by law to appoint an Audit Committee, but this course of action has been taken in line with guidance from CIPFA.
Risk:	The key risks associated with the SEND Passenger Transport are included within the Strategic Risk Register.
Equality:	It was not necessary to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment as a result of this report.
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no direct health and wellbeing implications from this report.
Social Value	There are no direct social value implications from this report.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A – Initial internal review of the SEND Passenger Transport Contract – *Exempt Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual and relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).*

Appendix B – Extract from the Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review relating to Key Line of Enquiry 04 SEND transport.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 There are no background papers.