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**To: Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

**Subject: Home to School Travel Assistance – Task and Finish Group**

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**1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To establish a Task and Finish Group of the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) to review the best value for Home-to-school Travel Assistance.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) are recommended to:
- 1) Establish a task and finish group to be involved in a review of the Home-to-school Travel Assistance Package (Appendix 1 - draft scoping document)
  - 2) Identify Members to take part in the task and finish group

**3 Background and Information**

- 3.1 The Board considered a briefing note on the 21st March 2024 which provided a background on the establishment and use of the home-to-school taxi service and an update on its review.
- 3.2 The current arrangement for home-to-school taxi provision was tendered under a Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended) compliant, open procedure, and commenced on 01 July 2018 for a term not to exceed ten years (up to 30 June 2028).
- 3.3 As a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), the arrangement allowed for providers to enter and leave the contractual arrangement during its term. There are currently 37 active providers on the DPS.
- 3.4 The briefing note, shared as part of the meeting set out how the arrangement worked, the role of the Passenger Transport Services (PTS) in reviewing applications, approving and amending routes, and issuing new calls for competition, together with issues currently being faced by the PTS including short-distance routes which were unattractive to providers and late or last-minute requests for transport.
- 3.5 There has been an increase of 26% in the number of children and young people being referred in the last five years, which has impacted on school taxi provision. Costs of the provision were set out in the briefing note, together with a list of the highest national daily transport costs for an individual pupil.

- 3.6 PTS were currently seeking to bring the more expensive routes back in-house and details of those routes were set out in the briefing note.
- 3.7 The Board questioned officers and the Cabinet Member on several points arising from the presentation including the following:
- The use of taxi service fares rather than a flat fee
  - Concerns that the current process did not provide best value for money
  - The percentage of parents who transport their child to school, in response, Officers agreed to provide that information to Members
- 3.8 Following discussion, the Board agreed to further explore the issues raised and establish a Task and Finish Group to ensure that the best value for the home-to-school taxi service was achieved.
- 3.9 Scrutiny members are invited to be involved in the review of the Home-to-school Travel Assistance Package alongside officers to ensure that we achieve the best value for money.
- 3.10 The task and finish group will meet for 2/3 times during the autumn with the intention of making recommendations to the Cabinet Member in the new year.

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