



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

**Date: 25<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

**Subject: Home to School Transport**

## **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To provide Members of the Board with an update on the progress and impact of the home to school travel assistance efficiency review, with particular reference to the financial impact of changes made during the 2025/26 municipal year to the contracting and commissioning arrangements for taxis and private hire vehicles.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board are recommended to:
  - 1) Note the details in the presentation and progress achieved.
  - 2) Make any relevant recommendations to the relevant Cabinet Member.

## **3 Information and Background**

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide home to school travel assistance for qualifying children of statutory school age to access education. The entitlement criteria is set out here: [Coventry City Council Home to School Travel Assistance Policy](#). The statutory duty is met through the offer of bus passes, personal budgets, independent travel training, in-house fleet (minibuses) and externally commissioned vehicles (taxis).
- 3.2 The Council's budget report approved in February 2024 allocated a savings target of £300k in 2024/25 rising to £500k from 2025/26 onwards against a SEND Travel Assistance Review. One of the workstreams within this was to undertake a value for money review, focused on the procurement of taxis and the e-auction process.
- 3.3 An end-to-end efficiency review of transport provision was undertaken between September 2024 and September 2025. The review highlighted several opportunities to improve the efficient and effective use of public funds. It placed particular emphasis on the commissioning of taxi services, aiming to broaden the provider base and strengthen the management of costs and contractual arrangements.
- 3.4 Until the end of the 2024/25 academic year, Home to School transport (taxis) was procured through the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). As the DPS remains

continually open to new providers, it created an ongoing administrative burden for the Council. In addition, the DPS does not enable price testing at system level and only allows price assessment at individual call off stage, limiting the Council's ability to manage or predict overall transport costs.

- 3.5 Following the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023, the Council implemented an 'Open' Framework in May 2025. This approach enabled the Council to set maximum rates and provided greater price certainty for future commissioning activity.
- 3.6 Upon establishment of the Framework, eleven (11) taxi operators were awarded agreements, including several new entrants to the market. These providers have since actively participated in bidding for routes throughout the 2025/26 academic year.

#### **4 Audit Financial Assurance**

- 4.1 The Internal Audit review (Feb 2026) concludes that significant assurance can now be provided over the financial management, control, and forecasting of SEND taxi provision. Recent service improvements have strengthened both financial efficiency and financial governance.
- 4.2 The report confirms that there are effective, well-controlled systems in place, and financial management of SEND taxi provision is now much stronger, more transparent, and more efficient.

#### **5 Financial Impact**

- 5.1 Following the implementation of the new procurement framework, it was estimated that the initial procurement exercise would deliver a £102k saving in financial year 2025/26.
- 5.2 At Quarter 3 (December 2025), forecasts showed further reductions in overall taxi costs as a result of this procurement exercise and various other efficiencies on taxi routes. This includes improved controls and governance as per section 4 of this report.
- 5.3 The service is forecasting to underspend in 2025/26, which if achieved would mean full delivery of the savings target.

#### **6 Health Inequalities Impact**

- 6.1 Whilst a disproportionate number of service users will experience health inequalities as a consequence of their economic situation, disability or equality of opportunity, home to school transport assistance is intended to support children and young people who are unable to access a school placement without support because the nearest suitable school is more than 2 miles from home (primary); more than 3 miles from home (secondary) or the child's special educational needs prevent them from walking to school under adult supervision.

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