

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	24 June 2021
<b>Subject:</b>	Passenger Transport Framework 2022/26		
<b>Report of:</b>	Interim Head of Education Excellence	<b>Wards Affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Cabinet Member - Children's Social Care		
<b>Is this a Key Decision:</b>	Yes	<b>Included in Forward Plan:</b>	Yes
<b>Exempt / Confidential Report:</b>	No		

**Summary:**

That the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education be authorised to conduct a tender exercise in accordance with procurement regulations and the Council's Contract and Financial Procedure Rules.

The tender exercise is to establish a Framework Agreement for Hired Passenger Transport service providers to run for a period of two years from 1st January 2022 with the option of two further one-year extensions;

**Recommendation(s):** That:

- (1) the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education be authorised to conduct an Open Procedure tender exercise for a new Framework Agreement to run for a period of two years from 1st January 2022, with the option of two further one-year Extensions;
- (2) The Basis of Evaluation will be:
  - MEAT (Most Economically Advantageous Tender) taking into consideration a balance between Price and Quality; and
- (3) delegated authority be granted to the Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education in consultation with both the Cabinet Member for Education and the Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care to establish the 2022/26 Framework Agreement on completion of the tender and to award any extension.

**Reasons for the Recommendation(s):**

The current framework agreement is made up of 15 hired passenger transport companies, in 4 lots, divided up into vehicle seating capacity. The core period will expire on 31st December 2021.

As part of this process, approval will be needed for Cabinet Member Children, Schools and Safeguarding to have delegated authority to establish the Framework Agreement at the back end of the tender process.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:** (including any Risk Implications)

No alternatives. Based upon the level of demand from commissioning departments there is currently an ongoing need for the Council to provide passenger transport to some service users. As such, this procurement exercise and the subsequent establishment of a Framework Agreement provides the Council with the opportunity to procure services at the most economically advantageous rates, whilst also meeting the stringent Health and Safety and Safeguarding issues associated with transporting vulnerable adults and children.

**What will it cost and how will it be financed?**

**(A) Revenue Costs**

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. This framework agreement establishes a list of approved suppliers, together with their tendered unit costs, from which, future transport contract bids for routes are measured, or individual transport is commissioned. The Home to School Transport Budget for the previous year 2020/21 (including Transport Team) was £7,529,300 (Increased in 2021/22 with budget growth to £8,690,350). This budget is frequently overspent. The use of the framework agreement will help to ensure value for money is maintained during the award of future contracts.

**(B) Capital Costs**

N/A

**Implications of the Proposals:**

<p><b>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):</b> There are no resource implications</p>
<p><b>Legal Implications:</b> Under Section 508 (B) of the Education Act 1996 the Council must provide travel free of charge to and from school for eligible children of compulsory school age aged 5 to 16.</p>
<p><b>Equality Implications:</b> There are no equality implications</p>
<p><b>Climate Emergency Implications:</b>  This framework uses a quality score rating in conjunction with a price scoring to award contracts to promote and encourage the use of more environmentally friendly vehicles.  As part of the quality rating, suppliers are encouraged to demonstrate their commitment to help tackle the Climate Emergency and will be marked accordingly. For example higher scores will awarded for providers using hybrid or electric vehicles, reducing their current fleet's vehicle age, or managing sustainability performance by signing up to schemes such as <a href="#">eco stars</a> or <a href="#">Energy saving trust</a> with an aim to providing a positive impact when compared to the current carbon footprint.</p>

## Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: This framework exists to ensure Sefton's most vulnerable members – Children and adults with SEND, and service users of Social Care are transported safely to and from home.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: not applicable
Commission, broker and provide core services: The Framework will help to support the core value of providing core services in the optimum way
Place – leadership and influencer: The Council will contribute to an improved place to live, work and invest, creating confidence of Small and Medium Enterprise businesses to grow and improve.
Drivers of change and reform: Encouraging transport providers to move towards a more sustainable manner of working, and the transition to more environmentally friendly vehicles.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: not applicable
Greater income for social investment: not applicable
Cleaner Greener: Encouraging transport providers to move towards a more sustainable manner of working, and the transition to more environmentally friendly vehicles.

## What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

### (A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6411/21) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.4612/21) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

### (B) External Consultations

not applicable. There is no intended change in policy or entitlement associated with this Framework. The service specification has taken account of feedback received on the service from current service users. Informal discussions with current providers have taken place about the intended procurement approach, no negative issues have been identified.

Further engagement with stakeholders will take place, via parent and schools partnership meetings, and via The Chest procurement software for providers.

### Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the "call-in" period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

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### **Appendices:**

There are no appendices to this report

### **Background Papers:**

#### **Introduction**

Specialist Transport was restructured as part of Public Sector Reform in 2019 and is now included within the newly established Travel Support Team. This team supports the delivery of all aspects of the Council's Home to School Travel Support Policy. It is recognised that there is scope to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of this service area and the restructure of the team was the first step in this process.

The team are now looking to improve a number of areas including procurement but at this stage a framework is fit for purpose. The current pandemic has affected the market place, and recent tendering exercises have identified there is a shortage of staff and vehicle resources. Key changes to the current Framework are aimed at encouraging more sustainable use of vehicles and promoting sub-contracting to increase the number of smaller providers increasing resources available for commissioning.

#### **Background**

The Sefton Travel Support Team commissions transport for over 1,150 vulnerable children and adults travelling to more than 85 different Schools, Colleges and Day Centres. It also provides journeys for these service users to and from respite centres enabling short-break respite for families and carers. In addition, the team supports Children's Social Care providing transport to enable access to contact meetings with family members, respite breaks and home to school transport.

The Hired Passenger Transport Framework Agreement will establish an approved supplier list and a pricing structure for two years with the option to extend for a further two years. The current Framework ends in December 2020.

A new framework will allow the Travel Support Team to establish an Approved Supplier List of suitable service providers. It also enables the Council to quickly award contracts directly by using the pricing structure established within the framework, to ensure best value without the need to run competitions. This is most frequently used for low cost trips.

Mini-competitions using the Approved Supplier List are used to ensure best value for more expensive routes, such as 16 seat minibuses with multiple passenger assistants to provide support for service users with a higher level of need. This new framework will allow suppliers an option to group a number of routes together for consideration at a reduced cost, providing opportunities for savings which may not be apparent to the Council.

Performance of each route will be reviewed throughout the contract and considered individually before an extension to any of the routes is offered. Key performance considerations are: punctuality, readiness for students to learn, and also factors in feedback from schools and parents.