

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 15th June 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director, Environment & Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Environment & Urban Renewal

SUBJECT: Preliminary Estimates for Passenger Transport Contract Tenders

WARDS: Borough-Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To comply with Procurement Standing Order 1.3.5, the Executive Board must be informed that the aggregate value of the proposed Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for transport contracts for passenger transport services is projected to be in excess of £1 million.
- 1.2 A procurement process will be followed, in accordance with Public Contract Regulations 2015, with the purpose of securing the supply and management of passenger transport contracts for Children's Services and Adults Services Directorates.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) the procurement of passenger transport contracts through a revised DPS is approved; and**
- 2) the Operational Director – Planning, Policy and Transportation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Environment and Urban Renewal, be delegated to deal with any matters relating to the procurement and operation of this contract.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council's Transport Co-ordination section is responsible for a complex range of passenger transport contracts and arrangements for vulnerable children and adults on behalf of Children's Services and Adult Services Directorates with full support from the Procurement Division. The Council have a statutory duty to provide these services.
- 3.2 These arrangements, if not provided by the Council's in-house fleet of passenger transport vehicles, must be contracted out for a period of up to four years (with an optional extension period) to external transport providers. Such providers typically include licensed taxi operators and

drivers as well as minibus companies. Where possible, however, priority is given to allocating passengers onto the Council's in-house passenger fleet provision. This is particularly for transport services that include multiple wheelchair users for cost effectiveness purposes and due to there being a severe shortage of wheelchair accessible minibuses in the immediate area.

- 3.3 Designated departments within Children's Services and Adult Services Directorates are responsible for providing the transport requirements for any vulnerable passenger that has an identified need and is entitled to assisted transport to educational establishments, adult day care facilities and community based settings respectively. Transport Co-ordination is then responsible for procuring the most cost effective and practical means of transport, considering health and safety of vulnerable passengers, depending on any mobility difficulties and additional needs of each passenger.
- 3.4 The Passenger Transport DPS process is a mechanism that enables the Council to identify transport providers who are capable of delivering the specialist nature of transport contracts on its behalf and to the standard identified in the current conditions of contract. There is a current DPS in place which will expire in August 2023, as a consequence a replacement DPS is required to be secured for September 2023. The DPS process provides a platform to advertise long-term and short-term contracts over a reduced advertising period as all of the qualifying requirements have been met by the providers.
- 3.5 To successfully register on the DPS, transport providers are required to demonstrate their capabilities of delivering contracts to the required quality and standard of service by completing a Mandatory Service Questionnaire (MSQ), this contains a series of relevant questions relating to the contract requirements.
- 3.6 All vulnerable children's and adult transport contracts will be tendered as individual contracts with each specifying the minimum size/capacity of vehicle to be provided, the specialist needs/requirements of the passengers to be transported and whether a passenger assistant is to be provided (by the transport provider).
- 3.7 It should be noted that there are currently 142 passenger transport contracts in operation. This includes 112 Special Education contracts, 6 Statutory School Age contracts, 8 Looked After Children contracts and 16 Adult Social Care contracts. The accumulative annual spend for the above external contracts equates to £2.9 million.
- 3.8 There are currently 14 transport providers, consisting of taxi and minibus contractors, on the existing DPS. The DPS process has the potential to attract additional transport suppliers which will enable extra capacity to cope with the volume of contract work required to be provided.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The dynamic purchasing system and subsequent tenders for contracts has the aim of reducing costs by testing the market with pre approved suppliers and with careful planning and optimising of routes to ensure best possible efficiencies are achieved for the transport services provided.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

All of the passenger transport contracts are constantly monitored to ensure that the required level and quality of service is offered to passengers on behalf of designated departments within People Directorate.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

A number of the passenger transport contracts to be tendered are to provide accessible transport services for vulnerable young people and adults to facilities providing key work based opportunities, training, lifelong learning and skills.

6.3 Healthy Halton

All of the passenger transport contracts to be tendered provide essential access to a wide range of activities and key facilities across the Borough and to out-of-borough establishments as required. Therefore, passenger transport directly helps to assist and ensure that vulnerable children and adults live in a healthy and active lifestyle.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Where passengers are not capable of and/or confident enough to travel by public transport, transport services provided enable all passengers to access facilities in a safe manner, ensuring they are socially included. Travel Training is provided, where identified and appropriate, to individuals to provide them with the skills, confidence and independence to travel by public transport in a non-intimidating environment.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

There are no direct implications arising from this report.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 Funding reductions will pose a risk to the passenger transport services the Council are required to provide. Relevant assessment departments in People Directorate may exert more stringent controls and criteria within their transport/travel policies and practice in order to manage reduced budgetary constraints.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 Passenger transport service contracts are constantly monitored to ensure the operation of these services embrace equality and diversity issues in line with the Equality Act.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 It is anticipated that over the short to medium term there will be a reduction in the number of routes to out of borough schools and educational establishments. This is to be achieved through the introduction of more localised provision thus resulting in a reduction in the number of children and young people needing out of borough provision, which in turn will help to reduce fuel costs and emissions.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

- 10.1 None for the purposes of the Act.