

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	<b>Education, Culture and Sport</b>
DATE	<b>18 November 2010</b>
DIRECTOR	<b>Annette Bruton</b>
TITLE OF REPORT	<b>Review of Kaimhill Transport</b>
REPORT NUMBER:	<b>ECS/10/099</b>

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to provide the findings of the review of transport provided for pupils at Kaimhill school. The review follows the decision by the Education, Culture and Sport Committee in August 2009 to provide school transport to all pupils during the temporary decant to allow for the rebuild of Kaimhill school.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- (i) That the Committee notes the content of this report and the lessons learned
- (ii) Instructs officers to ensure that in future projects these lessons are taken into account in project planning and finance forecasting.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The funding of pupil transport during the period of temporary relocation was agreed by the Education, Culture and Sport Committee in August 2009.

### **4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

This report and the lessons learned identified in it has implications for any future development of the learning estate.

### **5. BACKGROUND AND MAIN ISSUES**

The rebuild of Kaimhill School was scheduled to begin in October 2009. The project was part of the 3Rs project to replace and refurbish schools in the Aberdeen City School estate.

The governance arrangement for the 3Rs project was through a Project Board. One of the challenges for the 3Rs project was the three area structure which delivered operational services in each of North, South and Central but not across the whole council area. This was addressed in the 3Rs project by setting up a project management team for each area

which included, 3 officers, who operated from a cross council service on resources management. During the life of the development of the project there was a change in officers with some key officials taking up posts elsewhere. The major transition from the 3 area structure to the structure we have today was also taking place.

In the period leading up to the decant of Kaimhill there was much public debate about whether pupils should be bussed to school or not. The extant policy position was that, given the distance, pupils should be expected walk. The position taken by some elected members and some members of the public was that the terrain was unusual and felt to be unsafe by leading to a call for transport to the temporary school accommodation.

Given the existing policy on walking distance no funds had, at that time, been set aside for any public transport for the period of the decant to temporary accommodation.

It is clear from reviewing records, and from interviewing officers and elected members that there was much discussion and debate about the matter with the pros and cons of bussing pupils being debated in conversation. Officers appeared to be receiving conflicting views and what some officers understood to be instructions from elected members. Officers also appeared to be taking instructions from a sub-group which did not appear to have any formal governance remit for resource allocation. Officers did not seek a decision formally from an appropriate committee or governance group. The work that was being done to consider and then plan transport was quite detailed and went on from mid 2007 to the summer of 2009. Officers did however keep coming back to the point that the policy was clear that no transport should be provided over this distance. Despite this they were communicating mixed messages by continuing the work to cost the transport options. Other options such as improving the safety of the route, and developing support for walking were also being advanced at the same time.

The links between the central operational management of the 3Rs project with each of the three areas seemed to be weak in terms of operational management. Whilst the leadership at a strategic level appears to have been clear, the links between the resource management and those roles which fell to each operational geographical area were at times not clear. This led in part to a lack of coherent communication and the policy lines either not being sufficiently clear or open to different interpretation in the different areas of the city. Officers were not clear about where their roles and responsibilities lay with regard to a number of aspects of completing the transfer to the new 3Rs school. The matter of transport was one such area, as was the completion of some aspects of IT. There was a lack of consistency in each of the three areas with regard to roles and responsibilities for the operational 'get in' to the new schools.

During that time officers undertook work which they believed they had been asked to do by individual elected members however senior officers at the time in the three areas did not ensure that this work was sanctioned

by a committee at an early enough stage leading to expectations being raised without a formal decision having been reached. Representation by elected members on behalf of their constituents was not sufficiently separated out from the decision making process and the extant policy position. This led to confusion for all parties: elected members, officers and the public.

Officers appeared to be developing options for transport for the decant without that having been sanctioned formally by any committee with the power to agree the budget. There was no clear strategic officer lead within the service to oversee this work, consider the implications and manage the process across the services of the council. No papers were prepared for committees and the work seemed to be done on the tacit understanding that some parents and the public and some elected members wished there to be transport arrangements. Senior officers should have identified the risks associated with this aspect of the decant and taken a strategy to committee for approval and for resources to be allocated if necessary at a much earlier stage. The organisational shift in structure, the handover between officers and the lack of proper governance through a committee decision all contributed the lack of clarity, poor communication and resulted in expectations being raised without either a budget nor a policy to support the action.

### **Lesson learned**

There were key contributing factors that led to the uncertainty in this matter. The following recommendations are intended to build on the findings above and to inform future projects of this kind.

- Project plans should identify all aspects of the build, temporary arrangements, risks and potential additional costs at the outset of the project.
- A clear lead officer at a senior level should oversee all of the operational work of the project.
- Policy should be adhered to. Any proposed changes to policy should go the relevant committee to consider the implications of changing that policy.
- Any potential unforeseen costs not identified in the project plan should be communicated immediately to the Director of the relevant service and discussed by the relevant committee before any decisions are made or options are offered.
- Communication should be clear and through the appropriate channels
- Governance arrangements should be unambiguous and should be adhered to.
- Regular reports on all aspects of such projects should be communicated to the project team and /or Board and to the relevant committee.

## **6. IMPACT**

*This report links to the objectives set out in 'Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward looking' for education.*

- The best possible education for all our children is essential if we are to ensure that Aberdeen and its citizens have a prosperous future.
- In particular it relates to the objectives to:
  - Implement the ambitious £110 million 3Rs schools project
  - Ensure Aberdeen's pupils and teachers have school buildings fit for 21st century
  - Ensure expenditure on education delivers maximum benefit to pupils' education

## **7. Background Papers**

None

## **8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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