

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery
DATE	03 June 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Lochside Academy – Transport and Safe Routes to School – Annual Update 2021
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/21/110
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Mark Reilly
REPORT AUTHOR	Chris Cormack / Vycki Ritson
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update members on the performance of the transport services and arrangements for pupils accessing Lochside Academy and on the success of provisions in relation to the safe walking routes to Lochside Academy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 note the outcome of the 2021 annual review for transport and safe routes to school for Lochside Academy;
- 2.2 note that a Service Update will be submitted on 23rd September 2021, providing detail on the newly contracted services for the 2021/22 Academic Year; and
- 2.3 agrees that no further annual update reports are required to be submitted.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 At the Education and Children's Services Committee meeting on 16th November 2017, the committee instructed: "*the Interim Head of Planning and Sustainable Development and the Head of Public Infrastructure and Environment to undertake annual updates reviewing the success of the provision of the free bus travel and the safe routes to school, with the first review to be undertaken in March 2019 and thereafter annually at the end of the third school term with the outcome of each review to be reported to the relevant Committee at the earliest possible opportunity prior to the end of the fourth school term each year.*"
- 3.1.2 The data for this annual update relates to the academic year 2020/21, with data from August 2020 to April 2021.

3.2 Current Transport Provision

3.2.1 The Council currently subsidises 3 bus services operated by First Aberdeen and First Aberdeen commercially provides 4 bus services (part-subsidised through fare revenue from bus passes), which operate at school times, as follows:

- Service 21A: Cove/Charleston – Lochside Academy (Aberdeen City Council) (1 vehicle)
- Service 22A/22C: Balnagask/Torry – Lochside Academy (Aberdeen City Council) (4 vehicles)
- Service 31: Torry – Lochside Academy (First Aberdeen) (2 vehicles)
- Service 181/182/183: Kincorth – Lochside Academy (First Aberdeen) (3 vehicles)

3.2.2 Pupils in Kincorth, Leggart and Torry receive free transport between 07:00 – 18:00 and this is provided as an annual bus pass loaded onto the pupils Accord Card. Pupils in Cove pay to use bus services.

3.2.3 As a result of restrictions in place due to Covid-19, a number of changes have been made to the operation of the services operating to/from Lochside Academy:

- Services continue to operate as local bus services; however these have been re-designated as school only services, which means only school children can travel on these services and no adults are permitted to travel, as such, in line with dedicated school transport, no physical distancing is required.
- During the time Aberdeen was in an enhanced protection level 4, between January and March 2021, physical distancing was introduced on bus services to Lochside, in line with guidance from the Scottish Government, this varied from 2 metres in February 2021, then at an 'appropriate' physical distance in March 2021. From 12th April 2021, the services have returned to no physical distancing required between children travelling.
- In consultation with Lochside Academy and in line with requirements, the volume and operational times of services were amended between January and March 2021 due to the school closure; transport was maintained for keyworker children and vulnerable learners and services were gradually increased for the phased return to school, before returning to full operation on 12th April 2021.
- Children using public transport services, such as those operated for Lochside Academy, are required to wear a face covering for the duration of all journeys, except for those for whom doing so would create a medical risk.
- Transport Providers have appropriate enhanced cleaning regimes in place, in line with public health guidelines and further mitigations have been in place, such as hand hygiene and enhanced ventilation measures.

- The current delivery of school only services can only operate in the 2020/21 academic year, as by summer 2021, such services will require to have seatbelts in place, unless they are reopened to the general public.

3.3 Transport Performance/Feedback

- 3.3.1 The transport has operated well in the 2020/21 academic year. There has been close partnership working between School, Passenger Transport Unit and First Aberdeen to address any concerns and ensure services operate appropriately and this partnership has worked well to ensure adequate levels of service during times of amended school operation. There have been very few operational issues in the last academic year.
- 3.3.2 Due to the school closure prior to the summer holidays in 2020 and physical distancing requirements in school, there were challenges in getting the bus pass added to children's Accord Cards. As such, a prolonged period of application time was put in place and from August 2020 – Christmas Holidays 2020, for children using services 22A, 22C, 31, 181, 182 and 183, bus drivers permitted any children in uniform to travel, without the bus pass product being on the Accord card. For those travelling on the services 3 or 18 the school office provided pupils with a travel voucher, until their Accord Card had the bus pass loaded. From 6th January 2021, children were required to have a bus pass on their Accord Card or a voucher from school in order to travel.
- 3.3.3 The bus pass loaded onto the Accord Card continues to work relatively well, although this is still labour intensive for school staff, due to the volume of lost/damaged cards. No alternative has been progressed to date; this is due to the proposals for free bus travel for all persons aged under 19 in Scotland due to be introduced in 2021.
- 3.3.4 Bus use has been monitored via passenger reports from the ticket machines and by on-site observations. While buses can on occasion run quite full, there has generally been capacity for all pupils to get a seat over the 2020/21 academic year and it is considered that there is enough capacity to accommodate all the passengers. Lochside Academy and First Aberdeen have worked hard at managing pupils onto buses to ensure a proportionate spread across bus services and to avoid overcrowding.
- 3.3.5 As a large number of children were not presenting a bus pass prior to Christmas 2020 and due to the school closure between January and March 2021, the patronage numbers available from ticket reports are not fully reflective of numbers travelling. Every child was counted onto the vehicles for capacity purposes, but these do not always show accurately on ticket reports. As such detailed patronage data cannot be provided. The following is the average numbers travelling from the data available, which is considered to be less than the actual number travelling:
- Services from Cove (21A): 9 per journey
 - Services from Balnagask/Torry (22A, 22C, 31): 36 per vehicle, per journey
 - Services from Kincorth (181, 182, 183): 37 per vehicle, per journey

- 3.3.6 There has been minimal feedback from school and parents over the 2020/21 academic year and no suggestions for changes to transport have been made.
- 3.3.7 There has been an improvement in antisocial behaviour on the buses in the 2020/21 academic year, with significantly less reports than the previous year. In situations where antisocial behaviour has occurred, the School have worked closely with First Aberdeen to identify the children involved and acted promptly to work with the children involved to prevent a repeat. One area of non-compliance has been children not wearing face coverings on transport. The message continues to be enforced to children travelling and monitoring is ongoing by First Aberdeen and Lochside Academy.

3.4 Future Bus Service Provision/Recommendations

- 3.4.1 At the Education and Children's Services Committee meeting on 16th November 2017, the committee instructed: *"In order to support the transition to the new school . . . to provide free-of-charge transport (using public transport services) to the new Lochside Academy, for pupils living in Torry and Kincorth only (i.e. those pupils whose home address includes one of the Torry or Kincorth postcodes listed at Appendix 4), to take effect from August 2018 and initially for a period of three years."*
- 3.4.2 As the first 3 years provided transport up to the end of the 2020/21 academic year, a decision on future provision was required this year. At the budget setting process on 10th March 2021, the Council agreed to maintain a transport provision and budget for transport to Lochside Academy transport and as such transport provision will remain in place for the 2021/22 Academic Year.
- 3.4.3 The current bus service contracts will terminate at the summer holidays in 2021 and a tendering exercise will be undertaken for the provision of services commencing in August 2021, under the Framework Agreement for Contracted School and Social Care Transport 2018. Based on the satisfactory operation of services, passenger volumes being met by the available capacity and minimal levels of feedback, no significant changes will be made to the contract specifications, but this will be dependent on ongoing Covid-19 restrictions and the provision of free bus travel for under 19's.
- 3.4.4 Legislation has been approved by the Scottish Parliament enabling the introduction of a new statutory scheme to allow 5-18 year olds resident in Scotland to access free bus travel through the National Entitlement Card, there is also a commitment to extend this to those aged 19-21. The Scottish Government and its partners are working to set up the new scheme, which will start operating as soon as practicable during the 2021-22 financial year. More information can be found at: [Young Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme \(transport.gov.scot\)](https://www.transport.gov.scot). It is not clear yet when the scheme will start.
- 3.4.5 If the current bus services operating to Lochside can reopen to the general public, then the new 5-18 year old National Entitlement Card will be accepted on bus services to Lochside, as the services will be eligible. We will work to ensure services can be eligible if Covid restrictions remain in place, i.e.

segregated adult and children sections. Children will also be able to use the 5-18 year old National Entitlement Card for travel outwith school times.

3.4.6 Officers will provide a Service Update for the Education Operational Delivery Committee on 23rd September 2021 advising on the contracted transport arrangements to Lochside Academy in place from August 2021.

3.4.7 As the first 3 years have passed and children have transitioned to Lochside Academy and transport is operating well, it is recommended that no further annual updates are required.

3.5 Safe Routes to School

3.5.1 There have been no recorded incidents involving a school pupil from Lochside Academy over the period.

3.5.2 No amendments have been identified or made to the routes to school over the past year.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The current transport provision for Lochside Academy is met from existing budgets, and there are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	N/A	N/A	N/A
Compliance	Risk of breaching seatbelts on school transport legislation, if services continue to operate emergency Covid provisions, into the 2021/22 academic year.	M	Alternative transport delivery will be required. Options are available which will be reviewed if required.
Operational	Risk of not being able to deliver transport for all pupils, if further Covid-19 measures come in restricting	M	Further transport would require to be procured.

	capacity on bus services.		
Financial	<p>A risk of increased costs if further Covid-19 measures come in restricting capacity on bus services, requiring more transport to be procured.</p> <p>There is a risk that the Council will need to further subsidise bus services if the under 19's scheme does not match the current fare revenue from bus passes.</p>	L	<p>This will be managed in line with business continuity by prioritising transport services and identifying any Covid-19 funding streams from Scottish Government.</p> <p>The risk is low, and it is anticipated any increased subsidy costs will be off-set by no longer requiring to fund bus passes,</p>
Reputational	N/A	N/A	N/A
Environment / Climate	N/A	N/A	N/A

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	The proposals in this report have no impact on the Council Delivery Plan.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The proposals in this report have no impact in the delivery of Prosperous Economy Outcomes.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of Children & Young People Stretch Outcomes 4 to 6 in the LOIP. The provision of transport supports wellbeing and safety of all children attending Lochside and supports attendance at school, which will help with wellbeing, prospects and attainment.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 14 – reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by 42.5% by 2026. The provision of transport supports reducing carbon emissions as without the transport provision to Lochside Academy, it is likely more children would be transported by car to school.

<p>Regional and City Strategies</p>	<p>The proposals in this report support the Local Transport Strategy - a high quality public transport system is important for any thriving economy in transporting people to work and education and directly support the business and education sectors and ensures the workforce can travel effectively and that all have access to appropriate education opportunities and access to all facilities in a cost-effective way. The provision of transport to Lochside Academy will ensure appropriate access to education.</p>
<p>UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes</p>	<p>The proposals in this report have no impact on UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes; but will be subject to the Scottish Government's Young Person's Travel Scheme.</p>

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 N/A

10. APPENDICES

10.1 N/A

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