

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure
DATE	31 January 2012
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Audit Scotland Report on Transport for Health and Social Care - Self Assessment and Action Plan
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/12/008

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise members on the findings of the Audit Scotland Report on Transport for Health and Social Care and update on the performance of the Council and partner organisations.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the committee,

- (i) Note the key messages and recommendations from the Audit Scotland report as set out in Appendix A. Note the current performance by the Council following the self assessment.
- (ii) Request officers to report back to the May Committee with a detailed Action Plan setting out how the Council and partner organisations will tackle the areas for development following self assessment and how the Council will meet the recommendations as set out by the Audit Scotland report.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost for undertaking Social Care transport is met from existing budgets. The annual budget for 2011/2012 for the in-house passenger fleet is set at £1.12M and the annual budget for School Transport for 2012/2013 is set at £2.961M. The estimated spend for on demand Social Care transport will be approximately £250k this year, this is based upon previous years spend and projected forecasts. Prior to a detailed action plan being drawn up it is not possible to detail whether there will be any additional financial implications to the Council.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

At this stage there are no other implications. However if in future there were to be sharing of resources with partner organisations, then policy decisions will need to be taken and an understanding of responsibility for any non-council service users being transported on Council contracted transport and in-house passenger transport.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1 Background

A Bulletin Report was submitted to the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee on the 15th November 2011. The report highlighted that on 4 August 2011, Audit Scotland published its report on Transport for Health and Social Care. The full report can be accessed at http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/work/health_national.php?year=2011 and the key messages and recommendations from the report are set out in Appendix A.

Officers of Aberdeen City Council were involved in feeding in baseline data and information on ways of working to the study undertaken by Audit Scotland. Whilst not specifically referenced in the report, it is the case that a number of the Case Studies are similar to work that has been advanced by the public sector in the North East of Scotland. The single Case Study from this area relates to work on the Health and Transport Action Plan (HTAP) which has been progressed jointly by NHS Grampian, Nestrans (the Regional Transport Partnership for Aberdeen City and Shire), the Scottish Ambulance Service, Aberdeen City, Moray and Aberdeenshire Councils.

In Aberdeen City Council, through various structural re-organisation and efficiency savings initiatives, the Public Transport Unit has managed School, Social Work, In-House Passenger Fleet and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) since 2008, as well as the day to day liaison with bus operators for public services. This has resulted in an integrated unit managing all of the Council's passenger transport requirements and has allowed for greater integration in the use of Education and Social Work transport along with improved utilisation of the Council's in-house passenger transport. A further initiative currently underway is looking at the possibility of a shared Public Transport Unit with Aberdeenshire Council.

The Council also continues to participate fully in the development of the HTAP. Under the auspices of HTAP consideration is being given to the creation of a 'health transport information hub'. This hub would have three main functions: to provide information on available transport services to those requiring transport for health purposes; where appropriate to broker trips e.g. on community transport services; and, to create an information database on trip requests for planning purposes as there is currently only limited information on unmet travel needs.

The Audit Scotland report makes pertinent recommendations in relation to the efficient integration and delivery of health and social care transport provision. However, as acknowledged by Audit Scotland, it is important that the focus is on addressing current deficiencies and that the efficiency benefits already being accrued through integration of social care, education; DRT and public transport service delivery are not undermined.

The Audit Scotland Report makes eight key recommendations which are listed in Appendix A. The report recommends that a self-assessment is conducted to identify what the Council is already doing and/or requires to do, in order to address the issues identified in the report. A detailed Action Plan will also require to be developed based upon the outcome of the self-assessment.

5.2 Self Assessment

Below is a completed self assessment checklist for Aberdeen City Council. The checklist was designed for Regional Transport Partnerships, the ambulance service, NHS Boards, councils and other partners to improve transport for health and social care.

Fig. 1 Self assessment checklist for Regional Transport Partnerships, the ambulance service, NHS Boards, councils and other partners to improve transport for health and social care

	Assessment of current position					Comments
	No – Action needed	No – but action in hand	Yes – in place but needs improving	Yes – in place and working well	Not applicable	
Spending and efficiencies						
We routinely collect data on the activity, costs (including unit costs) and quality of services we provide			Yes – in place but needs improving			Financial monitoring and reporting is undertaken on all aspects of transport. Spends are reviewed and associated with each activity. Quality of service is routinely monitored for School Transport, whereby a Contract Monitoring Officer undertakes daily spot checks, undertakes site visits following complaints and produces bi-annual quality monitoring reports. There is less activity undertaken to monitor and collect information on the quality of Social Work Transport and in particular the councils in-house passenger transport.

	No – Action needed	No – but action in hand	Yes – in place but needs improving	Yes – in place and working well	Not applicable	Comments
We routinely benchmark performance and cost to ensure resources are used efficiently			Yes – in place but needs improving			All School and Social Work transport is procured through the undertaking of a competitive tender process and where practical transport is conducted by utilising the Councils in-house passenger fleet. This process allows the Council to ensure that transport procured is best value. As above noted performance is monitored by a Contract Monitoring Officer. More work could be undertaken to draw a direct link in terms of benchmarking performance and cost.
We regularly review funding arrangements for transport for health and social care to ensure that they maximise value for money and reflect local need			Yes – in place but needs improving			All Social Care transport is subject to an assessment being completed by officers in Social Care and Wellbeing. Only if a client passes the assessment criteria, is transport put in place. Transport is arranged with operators who have been approved following a tendering process or they are transported using the council's in-house

						passenger transport ensuring low costs. Improvements can be made by increasing the levels of joint working.
	No – Action needed	No – but action in hand	Yes – in place but needs improving	Yes – in place and working well	Not applicable	Comments
We have improved how we arrange transport services within our own organisation and considered the need for a central team or coordinated approach				Yes – in place and working well		As aforementioned all of the Council's passenger transport is arranged through the Public Transport Unit. This central point has allowed for greater integration between school, social work and in-house transport services. In addition we have utilised our in-house passenger fleet more effectively since early 2010 by using these vehicles to provide School Transport, more ad-hoc social work transport and to provide a DRT service (Community Transport).

	No – Action needed	No – but action in hand	Yes – in place but needs improving	Yes – in place and working well	Not applicable	Comments
We have reviewed the timing of appointments and care services to make sure that transport provision is considered.			Yes – in place but needs improving			The Public Transport Unit's primary Social Care service function is transport to day centre's and day activities. The timings of these cannot realistically be altered due to the nature of the service they provide. However a number of the centres do have staggered start times which allow for one vehicle to undertake transport for multiple establishments. Most of the on demand ad-hoc Social Care transport requests are flexible in their timings which allow the PTU to ensure the most appropriate and cost effective transport can be used, particularly allowing utilisation of the in-house passenger fleet. More consideration could be undertaken from a Social Care aspect as to the placing of clients, particularly respite clients, as transport does not appear to be given due consideration in this aspect.

	No – Action needed	No – but action in hand	Yes – in place but needs improving	Yes – in place and working well	Not applicable	Comments
We have reviewed the use of taxis and considered scope for efficiencies within our own organisation and in partnership with others			Yes – in place but needs improving			All School and Social Work transport is subject to competitive tender, which ensures best value. We have examined the costs of using external operators against that of using our own in-house fleet. In the last year we have ceased using external operators to provide day centre transport and this is now fully delivered in-house. We have also utilised our in-house transport to deliver two more school transport services, along with using the in-house fleet to deliver as many of the ad-hoc, on demand Social Care transport requests as possible. Further work is required to examine the potential of working in partnership with others. Work is ongoing under the HTAP to identify opportunities for partnership working and to establish if efficiencies can be made. This level of work is likely to take a relatively considerable period of time.

Working in partnership						
	No – Action needed	No – but action in hand	Yes – in place but needs improving	Yes – in place and working well	Not applicable	Comments
We have worked with partners to clarify responsibilities for planning and delivering transport for health and social care.		No – but action in hand				The Council has not undertaken any work on this aspect. However the matter has been raised and will be progressed through further work of the HTAP.
We have put systems in place to routinely engage with service users to ensure that their views inform the development of transport for health and social care services.			Yes – in place but needs improving			This area is relatively poor. The Council has undertaken satisfaction surveys, but not to any great extent with regards to Education or Social Care Transport services and certainly measures are required to improve engagement. The Community Transport DRT service was designed following surveys and consultation with service users and we annually undertake satisfaction surveys with members of the service. Any suggestions are taken into consideration and issues are addressed. Action is required in this area.

	No – Action needed	No – but action in hand	Yes – in place but needs improving	Yes – in place and working well	Not applicable	Comments
We assess the impact of service changes on users and other services, taking account of transport needs.			Yes – in place but needs improving			All service changes require an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment to be completed. All PBB options which may have affected these services would also have been subject to Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments. Improvements can be made by further engaging with service users and working with partner organisations to ensure viable transport options are available.
We ensure that transport for health and social care services are based on an assessment of need and regularly monitor and evaluate them to ensure value for money.				Yes – in place and working well		Social Care transport is only put in place following an assessment for eligibility. This eligibility is reviewed by Care Managers on an annual basis. Transport is only put in place with operators who have been through a competitive tendering process, so this also ensures best value.

	No – Action needed	No – but action in hand	Yes – in place but needs improving	Yes – in place and working well	Not applicable	Comments
We have ensured that staff members are well informed about all transport options in our area so that they provide good information to the public about available transport options, eligibility criteria and charges.			Yes – in place but needs improving			This is an area which has weakened over the past couple of years. When the council operated Concessionary Travel schemes, the team administering these schemes had good knowledge about transport options in the region and was able to disseminate this information. With a reduction in the team and less involvement in this area knowledge certainly has been reduced and needs to be reviewed. Also, as aforementioned, consideration is being given to the creation of a 'health transport information hub'. This hub would have three main functions: to provide information on available transport services to those requiring transport for health purposes; where appropriate to broker trips e.g. on community transport services; and, to create an information database on trip

						requests for planning purposes as there is currently only limited information on unmet travel needs.
	No – Action needed	No – but action in hand	Yes – in place but needs improving	Yes – in place and working well	Not applicable	Comments
We have put in place a plan to integrate or share services where this represents more efficient resources and better service for users, including considering an integrated scheduling system.			Yes – in place but needs improving			As above noted all of the Council's passenger transport is arranged through the Public Transport Unit. This central point has allowed for greater integration between school, social work and in-house transport services. Also we have utilised our in-house passenger fleet more effectively since early 2010 by using these vehicles to provide School Transport, more ad-hoc social work transport and to provide a DRT service (Community Transport). In addition investigations are being conducted looking at the possibility of a shared Public Transport Unit with Aberdeenshire Council. Aberdeen City Council currently does not use an integrated transport scheduling system. All transport is scheduled

						manually. Further investigations will also be considered under the HTAP to examine whether further integration or scheduling can be undertaken with partner organisations.
	No – Action needed	No – but action in hand	Yes – in place but needs improving	Yes – in place and working well	Not applicable	Comments
We collect information on the personal characteristics of people who need transport for health and social care to allow monitoring of equality and diversity and to develop services that meet their needs.				Yes – in place and working well		Applications for School Transport and Social Care Transport Eligibility Forms/ Transport request forms require full information to be detailed with regards to each service user's requirements and needs. This includes mobility aids/wheelchair information, medical information, behavioural information and emergency procedure information, all being detailed. This, along with transport assessments, means we can ensure transport is tailored to meet service users needs, including whether they require an escort on transport. In addition, with the Community Transport services,

						users must notify the PTU at the time of booking of any mobility aids used / wheelchair type and any medical conditions.
We involve the voluntary sector in the planning and delivering transport for health and social care to meet the needs of the local population.	No – Action needed					Currently we do not undertake any large involvement with the voluntary sector. Discussions had been held in previous years around whether the Council and voluntary organisations could assist each other. It is anticipated that further work through the HTAP will allow this Council to be more proactive on this front.

5.3 Conclusions and Action Plan

The above completed checklist demonstrates that the Council is already doing a large level of the work which addresses the issues raised in the Audit Scotland report, particularly having an integrated transport unit. In addition the Council has a robust transport assessment framework, high levels of transport integration and fully competitive tendering which places the Council in a strong position. The checklist does however identify a number of areas where the Council needs to do more to address the issues raised in the Audit Scotland report, in particular with regards to improved partnership working and greater engagement with service users.

An Action Plan is required to be completed and will be based upon the outcomes of the self assessment. This will steer the Council in the way forward to tackling the areas which require improvement. Many of the potential actions cannot however be delivered in isolation and the issues set out in this report will also be reported by partners in the NHS, Nestrans and neighbouring Councils to their relevant Boards and Committees, with a view to developing the required Action Plan in tandem with the development of HTAP.

As such the Council will need to undertake further consultation and engagement with these partner organisations in drawing up an action plan, to ensure that each organisations action plan is complementary to each other and guaranteeing a consistent approach across the North East region. A meeting of HTAP partners in December/January will allow officers the opportunity to initiate this process and to report back to the May committee with a completed action plan.

6. IMPACT

A key aim of the Community Plan is to ensure that all citizens have access to a range of transport options that reflect differing needs of age, gender, disability and income. The Single Outcome Agreement also sets a priority of improved public transport and integration of transport is a key to improving access to employment, education and training opportunities. The 5 year Business Plan sets out that we will support the delivery of a fully integrated transport network to support movement and economic growth.

This report is likely to be of interest to the public particularly as it assesses what the Council is currently doing to provide transport to Health and Social Care services. An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment is not required at this stage but should be produced for the follow up report detailing the action plan.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Audit Scotland Report on Transport for Health and Social Care -
http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/work/health_national.php?year=2011

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Chris Cormack, Team Leader, Public Transport Unit,
ccormack@aberdeencity.gov.uk, 01224 523762

Appendix A

Extract from Audit Scotland Report

Key Messages

- Transport services for health and social care are fragmented and there is a lack of leadership, ownership and monitoring of the services provided. The Scottish Government, Regional Transport Partnerships, councils, NHS boards and the ambulance service are not working together effectively to deliver transport for health and social care or making best use of available resources.
- From the limited information available we have identified that over £93 million was spent in 2009/10 on providing transport to health and social care services. There is a considerable underestimate as data on costs, activity and quality is poor. The public sector will find it difficult to make efficient and effective use of available resources without this basic information.
- Joint working across the public sector and with voluntary and private providers is crucial for the successful and sustainable development of transport for health and social care. Improved joint planning could lead to more efficient services. There is scope to save money by better planning and management of transport for health and social care without affecting quality. Prior projects show scope for efficiencies but these lessons have not been applied across Scotland.
- Reducing or removing funding from transport services can have a significant impact on people on low incomes, older people and people with ongoing health and social care needs. But the potential effect of changes to services is not often assessed or monitored and alternative provision is not put in place. The public sector needs better information on individual needs and on the quality of the transport services they provide.

Key recommendations

The short-life working group on healthcare transport led by the Scottish Government should:

- Take account of the findings and recommendations of this report in its work.

The Scottish Government and partners should:

- Work together to clarify responsibilities for planning and delivering transport for health and social care and how these link together.

Partners (councils, NHS boards, Regional Transport Partnerships and the ambulance service) should:

- Collect routine and accurate data on the activity, cost (including unit costs) and quality of services they provide and routinely benchmark performance and costs to ensure resources are used efficiently.
- Assess the impact of proposed service changes on users and other providers of transport.
- Ensure that staff have up-to-date information about all transport options in their area and provide better information to the public about available transport options, eligibility criteria and charges.
- Integrate or share services where this represents more efficient use of resources and better services to users, including considering an integrated scheduling system.
- Ensure that transport for health and social care services is based on an assessment of need and that it is regularly monitored and evaluated to ensure value for money.
- Use the Audit Scotland checklist detailed in Appendix 3 of the full report to help improve planning, delivery and impact of transport for health and social care through a joined up, consistent approach.