Lincolnshire
COUNTY COUNCIL
Working for a better future

Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson, Executive Director - Place

Report to:	**Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee**
Date:	**11 September 2023**
Subject:	**Transport Quarter 1 Performance Report 2023/24**

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of performance for quarter 1 in relation to passenger transport and the Council's Transport Services.

The Council's integrated service contracts and manages passenger transport on behalf of the Place, Children's Services and Adult Care Directorates and local bus transport – supported routes, fully funded fixed routes and demand responsive routes using the Callconnect service. Transport Services serves the people of Lincolnshire by enabling them to travel in order to access their requirements.

As a local transport authority, the Council has statutory obligations to provide educational travel and social care transport and to secure local bus services where none are provided commercially and which the Council determines socially necessary. Local bus services have been deregulated since the mid -1980s and as such bus companies can operate bus services on a commercial basis.

This report provides an update on the key priorities of Transport Services, which were highlighted in the previous report, including the Educational Travel Transformation Programme.

Actions Required:

The Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider and comment on the detail of the report and recommend any changes or actions to the Executive Member for Highways, Transport and IT.

1. Background

1.1 Overview of Lincolnshire's Passenger Transport

1.1.1   The passenger transport industry continues to face numerous pressures, for both bus and taxi suppliers. Fuel prices have started to increase again during this period, which will have an impact on contract prices across all services.

1.1.2   The Council's passenger transport supplier market continues to grow, albeit slowly and only with new taxi operators choosing to work with the Council, as opposed to bus operators. We now have a total of 366 operators with whom we contract with through our dynamic purchasing system – an increase of 34 since the previous quarter.

1.1.3   This period is the peak for activity surrounding educational travel, in order to establish the required provision for the start of the new academic year in September. The service is managing workloads more effectively, including the high volumes of customer contacts through telephone calls and emails.
   - As at 18 August 2023, since secondary school offer day in March, the service has processed 6,970 applications for educational travel, including new travel provision in September as well as day to day standard requests, such as changes of address and in-year new starters;
   - As applications are received, parent/carers have been informed that when applications have been received after the end of July, we are unable to guarantee provision in place for September. The communicated deadline was the end of May, but we have been able to be more flexible in this and work to a different timetable internally. For Post 16 passengers, the deadline for the payment of their contribution was the end of July and any contributions received after that date, will not result in guaranteed provision for September.
   - Bus passes are being processed, printed and sent to parent/carers directly on a daily basis, and the high volumes are being managed effectively.
   - There remain new contracts to be established for travel provision, which are being tendered daily and by the end August, the majority will be in place for the start of the academic year.

1.1.4   There remain risks associated with educational travel provision for the new academic year, largely related to parent/carers being unable to apply for travel provision after the end of July and the service not being able to put the required provision in place. The procurement process for establishing new contracts with transport operators takes time to deliver, and this is exacerbated at this time of year when the volumes of new contracts required is higher.

1.1.5   A further risk this year relates to schools and academies making changes to their session times, aligned to the Government's Schools White Paper, which includes schools offering minimum hours in a school week. Several schools have informed the service, and contracts have been amended accordingly. However, there may be other schools which are making changes to session times in September, which the service is unaware of. It is important to note that not all travel provision contracts with operators can be changed. Operators bid for contracts with specifications that

include school arrival and departure times. As such, if these change, the contract has to be amended and when an operator is unable to accommodate the change, the contract must be retendered. Operators are not contractually obliged to accommodate these changes.

1.1.6   The local authority continues to work in partnership with public transport operators to sustain services where possible, and the Council is supporting operators through developing promotional material and undertaking related activity in order to promote bus services and increase patronage levels. Some of the recent activity is listed below:
- Grantham Town Service is now supported by the Council in order to maintain peak time journeys;
- Several services contracted by the Council required retendering, due to the contractual parameters and these include the following: N100S - Mablethorpe to Theddlethorpe All Saints; 64 – Langrick Bridge to Horncastle. The contract prices for these are all higher than previously, some are significantly so, but all are in line with current market rates;
- Roadside information in the Birchwood area of Lincoln has required significant work to be updated, as part of the service changes resulting from the Western Growth Corridor related roadworks;
- The Council is working in collaboration with Norfolk County Council to support the Interconnect 505 service until the end of the year, following a significant reduction in patronage levels. This support enables the maintenance of a half hourly service, whilst allowing the two authorities and Stagecoach time to analyse passenger travel patterns and levels on the service.

1.2   Progress on Transport Services' Medium to Long Term Priorities

1.2.1   Transport Services is working on the following key priorities, in order to maximise opportunities, manage risks and in order to work towards establishing a Lincolnshire passenger transport strategy.

1.2.2   **Transport Services staff restructure** – A third round of recruitment has been successful in the appointment of staff to some key positions, including an office focused on data and systems, in addition to project management roles responsible for delivering the Bus Service Improvement Plan activity, funded through a grant from the Department for Transport. There remain 10 vacant posts in operations, which will be reviewed after the summer peak period of activity.

1.2.3   **Lincolnshire Enhanced Plan and Scheme, incorporating the BSIP** – this is a collaborative partnership between bus operators and the Council, focused on stabilising and developing the county's bus services. The partnership group meets on a quarterly basis, and the focus is currently on agreeing a refreshed BSIP by the end of October. The draft BSIP on the agenda for this Committee meeting. The Partnership has agreed specific schemes and projects to be implemented by the Council in order to deliver the Plan. These schemes are now in the development and costing stage and implementation with start as soon as possible.

1.2.4 **Rollout of an app-based booking system for Callconnect services** – Following the successful trial of an app-based booking system (June '21-May '23), the app is now being rolled out across Lincolnshire. Services in Gainsborough and the areas north of Lincoln moved over to the platform in June of this year and from late August, services in Spalding, Holbeach and Long Sutton will be migrated. This project is due to complete by the end of March 2024, when all DRT services will then sit on the modern digital platform, which will greatly enhance customer experience on Callconnect as well as creating more efficient administrative processes for the Council. To date, approximately 49% of all bookings are now conducted through the app (Via) showing good levels of channel shift from previous telephone-based booking. Below is a breakdown of the app requests for bookings per service:

3%	4S	Stamford
48%	15B	Bourne
67%	4R	Stamford
62%	4A	Stamford
57%	4P	Peterborough
23%	100L	Lincoln
49%	100G	Gainsborough
48%	101G	Gainsborough
27%	100S	Lincoln

1.2.5 **Educational Travel Transformation Programme** – the 3 year programme started in October 2021, with the initial focus on educational travel. Significant progress has been made on all of the transformation programme workstreams for educational travel, with overall objectives being to transform the transport service, make it fit for purpose, and deliver significant cost avoidance of circa £5million per annum. Activity has to date progressed across multiple elements themed into 3 key areas: Efficiencies, performance culture, and shifting the offer. As the service has been developing, transformation activity has become service-wide.

1.2.5.1 There remain key areas for service development, including the following:

- Cultural shift continuing, including a focus on customer service, in partnership with the Council's Customer Service Centre – communications and customer care training and development has been a focus, and the more effective management of the high volume of contacts over the summer peak period demonstrates significant improvement in this area;
- Management information development and use to drive a high performing service, including through a collaborative dashboard with Children's Services in order to project future trends and impacts – see a separate update below;
- Implementation of the new Travel Options function is complete with the last 2 members of the team fully recruited. This will enable and empower pupils to use travel modes alternative to taxis – from travel training SEN pupils to maximising opportunities for sustainable travel – This includes collaborative work with Adult Care and Community Wellbeing to support adults with independent travel training - A development plan is in place with the next steps

being promotion of the team and value to students independence throughout education settings to gain maximum uptake.

- Management of the educational travel budget pressure, which remains high for 2023/24 – the 3 year procurement plan to contract in geographical areas is the main activity aiming to reduce costs, alongside route optimisation and the Travel Options work noted above.

1.2.6 **Key performance measures and reporting** – The focus for developing performance measures is currently on educational travel. From a Public Transport perspective, the Council does not have direct control over the commercial network and, as such, developing measures would not be appropriate at this stage.
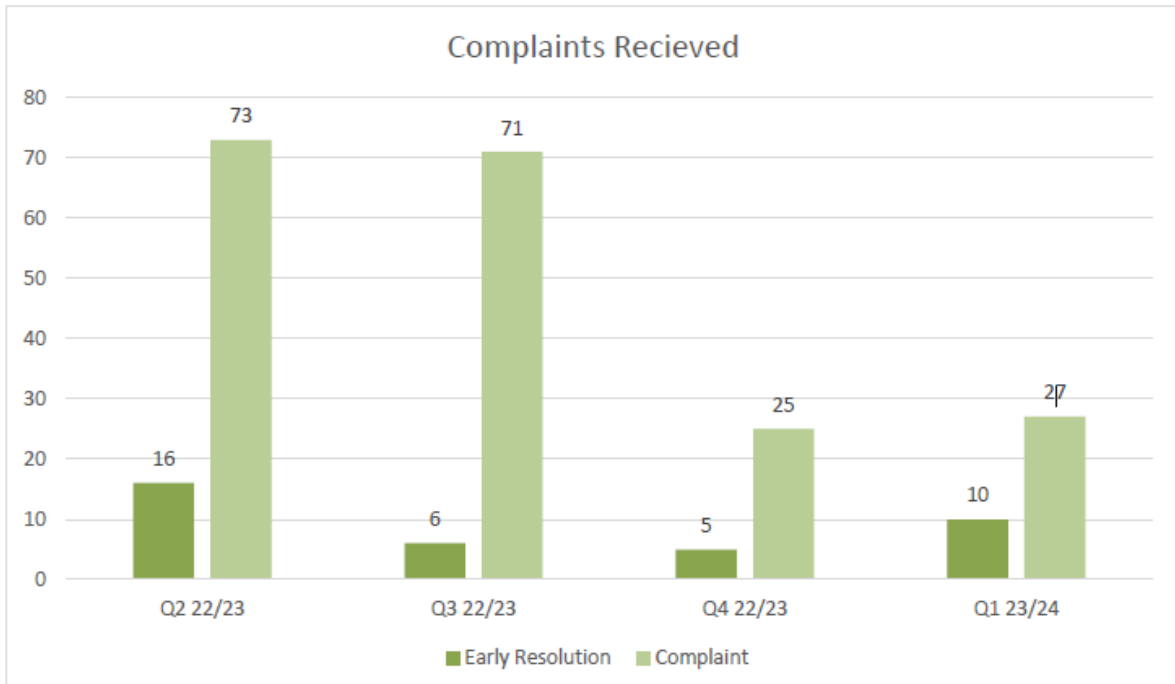
1.2.4.1 Transport Services manages more than 1,500+ contracts with more than 300 suppliers. As such, monitoring the effectiveness of these contracts is an important part of service performance. The service inputs into a corporate report on contracts and differentiates between 6 contract types (shown below) and the Red, Amber or Green (RAG) rating status for each is static, however the contract prices and the issues surrounding market capacity mean that the RAG status is either amber or red for all. Transformation activity is underway to mitigate and manage all issues.

i. Educational Travel - SEND
ii. Educational Travel – Mainstream
iii. Social Care Travel - Children's
iv. Social Care Travel – Adults
v. Tendered Local Bus Transport
vi. Callconnect

1.2.4.2 As was summarised in the previous report, in order to manage and monitor Education Travel performance, performance measures are being established and a dashboard created. The initial dashboard has been created and will be presented to this Committee at the next meeting. In the meantime, data validation work is underway in addition to training with the leadership team to ensure the dashboard can be used effectively by the service.

1.2.4.3 Transport Services received a total of 37 contacts in Quarter 1 of the 2023/2024 year, from individuals wishing to give feedback, report issues or complain about various services. Out of these 37 contacts, 27 entered the formal complaints process and 10 cases were handled as an Early Resolution, which equates to 27% of all contacts received. This is an increase of 11% in cases handled as Early Resolution from last quarter, even with an increase in total contacts, which is a positive development.

1.2.4.4 Transport Services has seen a large decrease in complaints in the last 2 quarters with a 62% reduction from Quarter 3. From the 27 cases, 20 were relating to educational travel and the remaining 7 were relating to public transport. Of the 27 complaints which were formally investigated at stage 1 of the complaints process, there were no cases that required escalating to the second stage. Out of the 27 cases, 15 cases where not upheld, 4 were partially upheld and 8 were fully upheld.

Complaints Recieved

Early Resolution / Complaint by quarter:
- Q2 22/23: Early Resolution 16, Complaint 73
- Q3 22/23: Early Resolution 6, Complaint 71
- Q4 22/23: Early Resolution 5, Complaint 25
- Q1 23/24: Early Resolution 10, Complaint 27

1.2.7 **Category Management Plan for Transport Supplier Market –** As per the previous report, an important part of a passenger transport strategy for Lincolnshire will be a vision and strategy for the transport supplier market the Council needs to meet the needs of residents and visitors. In the medium to longer term, a management and development plan will be established in partnership with the Council's Commercial Team and transport suppliers, to agree the market required as well as the opportunities and barriers involved. The current focus is to collect data and information from tendering activity, which will inform this piece of work. This priority will not be a key priority until later in the 2023/24.

1.2.8 **Lincolnshire Network Review** – We continue to work with operators to identify future demand levels for bus services and commercial plans for the network in Lincolnshire, as we work towards an integrated passenger transport network. The initial focus has been on contacting schools to collect data and information on travel provision they arrange themselves for their scholars. We have gathered a large amount of data and are now exploring how to use it to provide a more streamlined and effective network of bus services across Lincolnshire. We are working with two bus operators to identify where closed school and college services may be duplicating the commercial network, and then we will look for efficiencies and synergies to result in a proposal for schools and colleges. Our aim is to enable students to travel cost-effectively and in a way that supports the long term sustainability of the commercial bus network. Engagement with schools and colleges is starting in September.

2. Conclusion

2.1 The Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider and comment on the detail of the report and recommend any changes or actions to the Executive Member for Highways, Transport and IT.

3. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

The Transport Services risk register is regularly monitored and managed in accordance with the Council's approach to risk management. The highest scored residual risk is the negative impact of operating costs and inflationary costs of bus and taxi operators, on the service budget.

4. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Verity Druce, who can be contacted on 07920 576612 or Verity.Druce@lincolnshire.gov.uk.

This page is intentionally left blank