



WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

16 November 2022

Report Title	Internal Audit – Home to School Transport Limited Assurance Report
---------------------	---

Appendices – A - Home to School Transport Final Report

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide the details of the operational response to the Home to School Transport limited assurance report.

2. Recommendations

2.1. The operational action plan is noted

3. Issues and Choices

3.1. Report background

3.1.1. In line with our engagement standards, limited assurance audits are provided to the Executive Leadership Team and the Audit and Governance Committee, with operational managers in attendance to present their action plan, respond to any queries, and assure the Committee that the plans to address control framework weaknesses are robust. The report has been considered at Executive Leadership Team. The full report is attached.

3.2. Home to School Transport Limited Assurance Report

3.2.1. The audit provides assurance that the Council has in place appropriate arrangements to commission Home to School Transport with the safeguarding needs of children being a priority.

3.2.2. The assurance given to the system design is **satisfactory**, compliance with design is **limited** and organisational impact is **major**. Detail about the main issues is given below.

3.2.3. Adequacy of system design:

- Clearly documented Home to School Transport policies, Codes of Conduct and related guidance in place, which set out arrangements for the transport services and outlined roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders.
- Policies did not outline the escalation/ complaints process, and this process was not clearly signposted on the 'School Travel Assistance' pages of the Council's website, which is not in line with the current legislative requirements.
- Limited cooperation between the Home to School Transport and Taxi Licensing Service Teams and the few processes in place where the team's shared information were not documented.

3.2.4 Compliance with design:

- The annual audits of transport providers to confirm their suitability to be delivering services for the Council were not completed in a timely manner.
- Safer recruitment training for key staff at each operator and safeguarding awareness training for all drivers and PAs has not been delivered, which is not in line with the requirements set out within the DPS Service Specification and Supplier Agreement documents.
- Monthly management information has not been agreed or provided by the operators
- Regular meetings with operators have not been taking place.
- Inconsistencies were noted in the way the spot checks and complaints forms were completed.
- It was unclear whether actions were followed up appropriately due to inadequate record keeping.

3.2.5 Organisational impact:

- Weaknesses identified have left the Council open to significant risks. Annual audits were not completed consistently on operators, no management information was being provided in relation to the service provision, spot checks and complaints

records were not consistent, and actions were not always followed up in timely manner. If the risks materialise it would have a major impact upon the Council, with potential reputational and safeguarding issues as the key risks with possible financial implications.

4. Implications

4.1. Policy

4.1.1. Audit and Governance Committee is provided with operational assurance where control weaknesses are identified.

4.2. Resources and risks

4.2.1. As set out in the report

4.3. Legal

4.3.1. Internal Audit supports the Council to meet its obligations under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

4.4. Equality and Health

4.4.1. There are no specific equality and health issues to highlight within this report.