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REPORT FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES

EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE

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Presentation by:-

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TOPICS TO BE INCLUDED IN A POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

The history of home to school / college transport in the Wrexham CBC area

Wrexham County Borough Council assumed the responsibility of all Transport Co-ordination functions for the County Borough from Clwyd County Council in April 1996, including Public Transport and Education Transport. There had been a diminishing number of vehicles available throughout the area with the age profile of these vehicles gradually increasing along with the utilisation of aged double deckers. Problems were regularly met with regards to the covering of certain Education (home to school/ college) contracts and many local authorities were met with increasing costs in the provision.

What led to the introduction of Yellow Buses in the County Borough.

In 2001 a Best Value Review of School Transport was conducted which identified opportunities to explore ways in which recent trends could be reversed. The Transport Co-ordination Unit tendered for the introduction of high capacity single deck vehicles to replace the ageing double decker fleet.

Definition of the network – best value and operational implications

Opportunities were apparent whereby vehicle maximisation could be achieved due to the fact that the County Borough transported some 500+ students to Yale (Further Education) College, Wrexham from a wide catchment area. Twenty contracts were offered on differing contractual periods from the basic three years up to a maximum of ten years, the latter to include the provision of high capacity purpose built vehicles. First Group were successful in tendering for these twenty contracts on a ten-year basis by

utilisation of ten American-style Yellow Buses, each vehicle carrying out two contracts.

As well as improving the age and suitability of vehicle employed in the carriage of students the introduction of the yellow buses achieved an overall saving on the cost of the provision. In addition to this obvious benefit the Council could better budget for the provision of these services over a longer period, education transport contracts have historically been retendered every three or five years. In recent experience operators have been more willing to invest in newer and purpose built vehicles where the contract duration has merited it.

Pitfalls, successes and continuous improvement

Wrexham CBC is continuing to strive for improvements in the delivery of all forms of secured transport services, employment of double decker vehicles in the County Borough area currently represents less than 5% of the large bus contracted fleet. The tendering of any 'specialist' service provision will, almost always, reduce the number of contractors willing to quote for the work. Where operators are unsuccessful in being awarded contracts there is the potential for this to reduce levels of competition in certain areas in the future.

Subsequent Roll-out of additional 'Yellow' services

The Council has been successful in increasing the number of high capacity single deckers being operated in the area. In April / May 2004 six more 10 year contracts were let for which the successful companies are now taking delivery of the BMC Yellow Bus variant. The tendering exercise again demonstrated best value and further enhances the ability of the Council to make long term budget projections for education transport spend as well as enhancing the environment for student travel in the County Borough.