

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

Policy Review: School Transport

1. Purpose

To consider the process, programme and terms of reference for a brief review of school transport.

2. Background

On 10 December 2003 the committee agreed to include a policy review of school transport in the forward work programme. It was also agreed that the terms of reference and the need for an expert adviser would be considered by committee on 28 January 2004.

The National Assembly Transport Directorate has recently carried out an audit of school transport provision by local authorities in Wales. The results should be available before Easter. The Welsh Local Government Association is considering commissioning a research project on school transport. No details are yet available.

3. Terms of Reference

"To examine the arrangements made by local authorities in Wales for transport of pupils by bus to and from school. To examine the type of buses used and measures taken to ensure the safety of pupils during their journey. The committee shall take account of the School Transport Bill, due to be published in draft later this year. The committee shall submit a report to the Assembly Minister and the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Children and Young People."

4. Programme

January 2004	Agree terms of reference
April 2004	Appoint an expert adviser (subject to committee approval)
April 2004 to June 2004	Gather information and consider the School Transport Bill
Summer Recess 2004	Clerk to prepare draft report
October 2004	Committee to approve final report

5. Expert Adviser

Members are referred to the Presiding Officer's guidelines on the appointment of expert advisers, in accordance with standing order 8.14. These guidelines are at Annex 4 of the Handbook on Committee Procedure. Briefing has been provided by the Members' Research Service and they will be able to update this if required. It is considered that it would be useful to appoint an expert adviser for a short period to assist the committee in planning the review, particularly to advise on who should be invited to present evidence to the committee.

The costs of employing an expert adviser are likely to be in the region of £150 per day, for around 15 days between April and June. In addition, there may be travel and subsistence expenses. The cost of any advertising must also be taken into consideration. This should be kept in proportion to the direct costs of fees and expenses, which would probably be around £3,000. Advertising in the press is expensive and it is suggested that the Committee invites applications in appropriate transport publications and through its website.

If the Committee agrees to the recommendations below, the Committee Clerk will draw up a job specification in accordance with Presiding Officer's Guidelines and will circulate these to members for approval. Expert advisers should be appointed using procedures compatible with the National Assembly's Code of Practice on Public Appointments. It is suggested that a panel comprising the Chair, two other Committee Members plus the Committee Clerk determines the appointment procedure.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- Approves the terms of reference at Section 3;
- Approves the programme at Section 4; and
- Agrees to appoint an expert adviser.

Members' Committee Services