

REPORT FOR: CABINET

Date of Meeting:	28 October 2010
Subject:	Special Needs Transport (SNT) II Refresh project
Key Decision:	Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cost• Impact on wards within the Borough
Responsible Officer:	Catherine Doran, Corporate Director of Children's Services and Paul Najsarek Corporate Director of Adults and Housing
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Mitzi Green, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Enclosures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equalities Impact Assessment• A printed and bound copy of the Full Business Case has been placed in each of the party offices and the Members' Library

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the case for improving the travel support provided to children and adults with special needs whilst at the same time reducing the cost of that assistance.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

- 1) approve the solution proposed (section 2.3), namely a review and re-organisation of the operational SNT service, and the establishment of new assisted travel services (assessment, travel training, and travel assistants), and thereby authorise the Corporate Director of Children's Services to implement the proposals.

- 2) Approve the temporary virement of £346k from the monies set aside for the 2010/11 pay award to fund the delivery costs in 2010/11.

Reason(s):

- 1) Improve the customer offering. Provide greater independence for customers through the offer of more travel options than simply a Council Bus service or taxi.
- 2) Run the service with greater efficiency. Improve the overall SNT process, from initial travel assessment, through commissioning, to final service delivery.
- 3) Reduce demand for the service. A reduction in demand for Council provided services.

Section 2 – Report

2.1 Introduction

The Harrow SNT Service is highly regarded by those who travel on the Council's buses or are otherwise provided with transport, and the destinations that are served by it. Just as the first SNT business case, the second is not a reflection of a fundamental problem with the service; there is no question that assisted transport is one of the Council's core responsibilities, and one that it is committed to provide to a high standard even in straitened times. This does not mean that it could not be done better (or differently), and at a reduced financial cost to the Council

Placement on a Council Bus or taxi is the least attractive outcome for both the Council (financial) and for the individual concerned (dependency), and should only be the result of all other options having been exhausted. The Council should be providing a personalised service to citizens and delivering the best outcomes based on individual needs, however, alternative options to placement on the bus service or taxi are currently very limited. What is proposed is a variety of travel options that can be tailored to the needs of each individual and their parents/carers.

A Travel Assessment Service will be established, and this service will recommend the most appropriate travel plan for an individual. The plan may begin with preparation and training for independent travel, it will consider the potential for an individual to receive personal assistance (semi-assisted travel) on public transport, or to walk, and when appropriate, placement on a Council Bus or taxi. It has to be acknowledged that there will always be a significant percentage of children and adults with special needs for whom council provided transport is the only possible outcome. However, there is an equally significant percentage that has the potential to benefit from a different means of travel. Individuals will be given the support to achieve their full independent travel potential. No changes are proposed to eligibility for travel assistance as part of this business case.

The activities proposed do not affect eligibility for adult transport and the benefits do not assume any change in eligibility. This issue is currently the subject of a consultation with stakeholders; an exercise being conducted by Adult Services.

The re-modelling of the service's management is both a reflection of a change in the nature of the service proposed, and a response to best practice advice.

What is proposed has all been successfully achieved, in some form, by other Councils. It is recommended that Harrow borrow from and burnish what has been achieved elsewhere, and realise both the quantitative and qualitative benefits available.

2.2 Background

The SNT Full Business Case (FBC) builds upon the Outline Business Case (OBC) approved by the Transformation Board in May 2010.

A significant amount of work has already been completed on refreshing the SNT service.

1. Contract Hire fleet vehicle rate reduction.
2. Route optimisation and management (FBC I)
3. Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG)

There are still a number of issues impacting the service and service users which the next phase will seek to resolve.

It should be noted that the route optimisation benefit has yet to be fully realised, as the re-modelling required is still in process, and the new fleet is still being delivered (complete for Children, ongoing for Adults). A Benefits Realisation Report has been requested by the Leader of the Council once the new fleet is in place, and the route re-modelling is complete.

2.2 Issues

The issues being addressed by the project are the need for improved efficiency in the way in which the service is managed, and the yearly increase in overall demand for the service. Both of these put pressure on the financial ability of the Council to provide appropriate assistance.

2.3 Solution

The SNT Refresh II project will deliver the following:

- 1) Service Development
 - a) A review of the travel service provided, from travel (only) assessment through to service delivery.
 - b) Design and implement a new operating model for managing and delivering the service to incorporate and take account of the changing nature of demand, the best practice recommendations of the Audit Commission, and the Council's policy on spans of control.
- 2) Demand Management
 - a) Establish an Assisted Travel Assessment Service to ensure that the Council's policies on assisted travel are adhered to, and that customers are offered travel options appropriate to their needs.
 - b) Establish a formal travel training capability, and subsequent training for clients assessed as having the potential to travel independently.
 - c) Reduce the demand for escorts on the bus and taxi service through the use of suitably qualified Council staff on revised shift / extended hours.

- d) Establishment of (volunteer) Travel Assistants to provide assistance on public transport, or support for self-propelled travel.
- e) The (financial) encouragement of parents / carers to make travel arrangements instead of the Council (Children's Services only).

This solution will help to ensure that Council continues to provide the highest level of support to some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

It is proposed that the Assessment Service be established for Children's Services initially. Adult Services will make a decision on the use of the service in the light of the outcome of the consultation on eligibility and the outcome of the consultation on charging for transport.

The project will be delivered within the framework of the Better Deal for Residents Programme, and will be managed by a joint Council/Capita team.

2.4 Solution delivery

Delivery of the initial programme of work will be project managed by Capita. A formal procurement process will be followed to obtain a suitable third-party supplier for the new travel assistance services proposed.

Once the new services have been established, to the contractual satisfaction of both Capita and the Council. the third-party supplier contract will be novated to the Council.

2.5 Implications of the Recommendation

The SNT service will be able to make significant progress towards internal and corporate objectives, whilst at the same time realising both financial savings and improved customer service. There has already been consultation with the unions on the business case, and there has been significant input from both staff and clients in both Children's and Adult Services.

The anticipated impact of the project on key stakeholder groups is summarised below.

a) Commissioners

The re-modelling of the service will improve both its flexibility, and the price at which it is offered to both Children's and Adult services.

b) Passengers

One of the main imperatives for the project is to establish a wider range of travel options for passengers. Rather than rely solely on a bus service or taxi, the assisted travel, and travel training options will mean that there are alternatives to propose that offer the possibility of greater independence.

c) Drivers and Escorts

There will potentially be increased opportunities for both drivers and escorts as a result of the organisational changes required to ensure compliance with the Council's spans of control policy. The reduced demand for a provided

service will be reflected in a reduction in the number of agency staff utilised. No redundancies are anticipated as a result of the project.

d) SNT Service Managers

Increased compliance with the Council's Spans of Control will free up a lot of service manager time, and permit a greater concentration on more appropriate managerial activities.

2.6 Considerations

2.6.1 Resources, costs

The costs of the project are based on a fixed price with rigorous change control processes. They include the cost of Capita (and their sub-contractors) and all Council resources. The Council will be providing programme management, HR and communications resources as well as business change champions from both Adults and Children's Services. Capita will be the prime systems integrator and will be providing both programme and project management.

A breakdown of the projected savings for each of the project elements is provided in the table below. Benefits will be tracked using the Better Deal for Residents established benefits management process, monitored by the Project Team and Service, and further reviewed by the Better Deal for Residents Programme Board (CSB).

Table 1 – Forecast of gross savings separated between Children's Services and Adults

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Children's Services	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Service Development	17	17	17,	17	17
Independent Travel Training	94	163	220	264	300
Travel Assistants	93	100	100	100	100
Out of Borough	99	124	124	124	124
Children's Services Total	303	404	461	505	541

Adults	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Service Development	17	17	17	17	17
Independent Travel Training	34	58	80	101	122
Travel Assistants	157	167	167	167	167
Adults Total	208	242	264	285	305
Grand Total	511	646	725	790	846

2.6.2 Staffing/workforce

The project will be introducing minor organisation and individual job design changes. These will be developed in consultation with Unions and staff, and introduced using Harrow's HR guidelines for managing organisational change.

2.6.3 Legal comments

All of the activities proposed will conform to agreed council policy on assisted transport. This reflects the following considerations:

> The Council has a statutory duty under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 to provide to eligible residents facilities for, or assistance in, travelling to and from services provided under that Act and s29 of the National Assistance act 1948, which includes day centres.

> The Council has a statutory duty under s.508B Education Act 1996 to make necessary transport / travel arrangements to and from school free of charge, for eligible children. Travel arrangements are arrangements of any description and include voluntary arrangements by parents.

>The Council also has a statutory duty under s.508F Education Act 1996 to make arrangements for young persons under 25 subject to a learning difficulty assessment, to facilitate attendance at an educational institution.

n.b. None of the above legislation prescribes in detail how individuals are assisted.

2.6.4 Community safety

Designated service users, both current and potential, will be travel assessed as appropriate before any recommendation is made regarding the transition to independent travel. Service Users and their parents/carers will be fully supported in managing this transition. All volunteers used will be subject to appropriate vetting. There are no significant wider impacts on community safety.

2.6.5 Financial Implications

The project will result in a net revenue saving of £255k in 2011/12, rising to £385k in 2012/13 and will have fully covered the implementation costs by 2013/14. The possibility of 'front-loading' the project, and achieving a positive position sooner, will be explored.

The achievement of savings in future years requires one off project development and implementation costs totalling £686k in 2010/11. It is proposed that £340k of these costs are funded from the transformation programme budget, with the remaining balance of £346k to be funded from the £550k set aside for the 2010/11 pay provision that is no longer required. One off costs of £100k will be incurred in 2011/12.

The projected net savings will be taken into account in the draft medium term financial strategy that will be considered by Cabinet in December. The savings are based on the estimated numbers of future users of the service and as such will be subject to refinement as the project is implemented.

The table below sets out the summarised position.

Summary of Revenue Costs and Savings

	2010-11 £000	2011-12 £000	2012-13 £000	2013-14 £000	2014-15 £000	2015-16 £000
Implementation costs	686	100				
ongoing running costs		156	261	261	261	262
Total costs	686	256	261	261	261	262
Savings		-511	-646	-724	-790	-846
Net	686	-255	-385	-463	-529	-584

2.6.6 Performance Issues

There are no formal performance indicators for SNT. Service performance improvement, resulting from the project, will be measured by demonstrably reducing the cost of the management overhead. Customer feedback on the new services delivered (Independent Travel Training and Travel Assistants) will be gathered to assess their ongoing performance.

Project performance will be monitored using standard Business Transformation Programme tools.

2.6.7 Environmental Impact

There is no specific requirement for an environmental impact assessment. The impact will only be positive (an increased use of public transport).

2.6.8 Risk Management Implications

The risks will be included in the Directorate risk register. The project team will maintain a separate risk register to manage day to day issues.

ID	Description	Impact	Mitigation
1	The Supplier's capability to develop and deliver the operating models required, and then recruit and retain the staff and volunteers to maintain them, is found wanting.	Operations of the assessment, volunteer and training services are compromised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The supplier must have a strong track record of delivery > Close monitoring and management of the supplier aligned with an active management of risks and issues
2	Schools, Resource Centres and SNT Staff do not embrace the change from dependence to independence. The current service engenders dependency on Council resources, and the introduction of an assessment service and subsequent alternative solutions will benefit greatly if there is buy-in from all parties involved.	The quality and effectiveness of delivery are compromised	Ensure that schools, centres and staff are all part of the service development and both understand and support the changes.
3	Volunteers prove unreliable	Drop-out rates, or ad hoc failures to turn up mean journeys cannot be delivered as planned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Retention of a standby assistant pool to cover inevitable ad hoc no-shows > Ensure that the volunteers feel valued through suitable recognition and reward
4	Volunteers prove difficult to recruit	Semi-assisted travel fails to occur in the volume anticipated, leading to an overall reduction in benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Ensure that the service is marketed in a way that emphasises the positive nature of what is proposed; both for the passenger and the assistant. > Harrow volunteer services have 150+ volunteers on their books waiting for an opportunity.
5	The voluntary sector does not fully engage with the project	Buy in from the Voluntary Sector is critical to the success of the project and so failure to generate enough support will lead to a shortfall in supply.	Ensure that communications with all appropriate voluntary organisations are effective.
6	The risk averse nature exhibited by service users and parent/carers means that the number of volunteers to be trained is below that assumed in the business case	Benefit below that expected	Good communication to users, and parents/carers, to stress that travel independence is possible within an acceptable spectrum of risk
7	Parental discussions lead to a realisation that some parents are receiving subsidy for transport, while others providing the same transport are paid nothing	Claims for financial assistance from parents who currently claim nothing	Exercise good judgement as to whether the claim is valid (what has changed for assistance to now be asked for).
8	The delivery of benefit within the business case is assumed to be smooth with each passenger no longer requiring the service equalling an immediate cashable saving.	An overspend results from the gap between passenger withdrawal and cost release	The business case has a 10% per annum reduction in costs benefit for years 2-10 to cover the time delay between passenger release and cost negation.

2.6.9 Equalities implications

A full Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been conducted as part of the Full Business Case composition process. It will be subject to addition and amendment throughout the implementation lifecycle to ensure that all assumptions are thoroughly tested, and that the EIA reflects what is actually delivered

The high-level points of the EIA are as follows:

- 1) A broad informal consultation has been undertaken with all key stakeholders
- 2) There are a number of positive impacts anticipated as a result of the project proposed
- 3) There are no significant negative impacts anticipated from the project proposed
- 4) A formal review of the EIA will be undertaken at the significant Stage Boundaries of the project (System In Place, Go Live and Stabilised)

2.6.10 Consultation

No formal consultation has been undertaken whilst defining the new assisted transport services. Informally, opinions have been sought from all significant stakeholder groups, both in Harrow, and from other Councils who have established similar services.

The creation of new assisted transport options is merely an augmentation of the existing service, and deprives no one of assisted transport. Rather, it widens the options for that assistance.

2.6.11 Corporate Priorities

The project will primarily support the Corporate Priority of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable children, young people and adults.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Emma Stabler

on behalf of the
Chief Financial Officer

Date: 22 October 2010

Name: Matthew Adams

on behalf of the
Monitoring Officer

Date: 25 October 2010

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Liz Defries

on behalf of the
Divisional Director
Partnership,
Development and
Performance

Date: 11 October 2010

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: John Edwards

Divisional Director
(Environmental
Services)

Date: 11 October 2010

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Angus Wallis, Project Manager, Business Transformation Programme, Tel: 020 8736 6777

Background Papers:

- SNT II Refresh – Full Business Case
- Equalities Impact Assessment

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

NOT APPLICABLE

Appendix A

Frequently asked questions

How does the Special Needs Transport (SNT) service currently operate?

The Special Needs Transport Service is provided to Harrow residents, both adults and children, who have an entitlement, as defined by the Council's entitlement policies, and have requested it. The service currently provides the following key services:

- 1) The transportation of children with special needs to special schools, mainstream schools and colleges. Most of these journeys are within the borough, although there are a number of journeys outside the authority which are also completed.
- 2) The transportation of adults with special needs to a number of Day Centres and Neighbourhood Resource Centres across the borough,

It is a well-regarded Council service and an essential part of the Council's commitment to supporting vulnerable people in Harrow.

What are the aims of the project?

The project has two key aims:

1. to optimise the efficiency of the SNT service through a review and refresh of the way in which it is provided and managed;
2. to offer those who are eligible to use the service travel options above and beyond transport on a Council bus or taxi.

The successful achievement of these aims will mean not only a better service for those who require assistance, but one that costs the Council Tax payer less to provide.

What will the project deliver?

1. Service Development. A restructure of the way in which the service is managed. This will incorporate the findings of the service review, and the changing nature of demand which has consequences for the service provided.
2. Assessment. A Travel Assessment Service will be established to ensure that the Council's policies on assisted transport are adhered to, and that customers are offered transport options appropriate to their needs.
3. Independent Travel Training (ITT). The establishment of a formal travel training capability, and the subsequent delivery of training to all clients who are assessed as having the potential to travel independently, and who wish to be trained.

4. Semi-assisted travel. The establishment of (volunteer) Travel Assistants to help support service users to travel more independently if they wish to do so.

What will this mean for Service Users?

From the perspective of the client, the differences to the service will be as follows:

1. an increased variety of travel options;
2. increased self-reliance and independence, and;
3. reduced journey-times.

Will Service Users be obliged to use the services proposed?

The Assessment Service will be available to be commissioned by either Children's or Adult's services. It is only intended to be required for individuals for whom assessors require a second (expert) opinion as to the best travel options.

The ITT and Travel Assistant service will only be provided with the assent of the Service User and their parents/carers.

What will this mean for SNT staff?

There will be increased opportunities for both drivers and escorts if new 'Team Leader' roles are created. The reduced demand for a provided service will be reflected in a reduction in the number of agency staff utilised. No redundancies are anticipated as a result of the project.

When will the services proposed become available?

Broadly, the timetable for delivery is as indicated below.

- Service restructuring will complete in the first quarter of 2011
- The Assessment Service will be operating by the beginning of 2011
- The Independent Travel Training service will be available from the beginning of 2011, and will have trained 40+ service users by the middle of 2012
- Travel Assistants will start to be paired to service users by the beginning of 2011, and by the middle of 2012 there will be 50+ Travel Assistants

What was the SNT I Refresh Project?

The first project for the SNT service refresh delivered new software to assist with the modelling of transport routes, and the ongoing management of the service.