

AUDIT REPORT 19'026

TRANSPORTATION – DIAL-A-BUS SCHEME

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The annual audit plan provided for a review to be undertaken of the Council's Dial a Bus Scheme, including arrangements for accounting for income. The Dial a Bus Service operates throughout Moray providing accessible door-to-door transport for residents who cannot utilise scheduled bus services, for example due to access reasons or lack of service in the locality. The demand-led Dial a Bus service is operated by the Public Transport Unit, mainly utilising available vehicle and driver resources in the time period falling between school bus and social care transport commitments.

In terms of scale the annual service budget for the full 18/19 financial year is £195,000, comprising of £262,000 in operational costs and £67,000 of income derived from government grant for concessionary travel, ticket sales to passengers and a private developer contribution for enhancing public transport arrangements. Although the service is available to all eligible Moray residents, over 90% of Dial a Bus travel is undertaken by persons aged over 60 or with a disability, under the free national concessionary travel scheme. The standard fares for the journeys undertaken by concessionary travellers are reimbursed by central government at a standard 56.5% subsidy rate applied to all Scottish bus service providers, with the remainder of the lost revenue borne by the Council as service operator.

The scope of the audit was to review the systems and processes for making Dial a Bus service bookings, including ascertaining eligibility for travel, and confirm the system for scheduling of journeys achieves optimisation of resources. Controls over service income in the form of ticket sales to passengers and concessionary fare travel reimbursement from Transport Scotland were also within the audit remit. The audit process has involved the Public Transport Unit in their operation of the service and also the Customer Services Contact Centre who administer all Dial a Bus passenger bookings.

The audit process has found sound operational controls to be in place over service administration with robust systems in place covering the key areas of passenger booking, travel scheduling, actual travel recording and financial accountability. As a result, no recommendations for improvement have been made as a result of the audit coverage. A new cash and banking procedure has recently been introduced in February 2019 to account for fare monies collected on board the Dial a Bus vehicles. The procedure aims to improve controls over cash handling and provide an effective audit trail reconciling passenger fare payments to lodgements in the Council's bank account. Monitoring arrangements for the new process are comprehensive, and although minor administrative issues have been identified in the first month of operation, should ensure sound practice is exercised going forward.