

Committee Report



KEY DECISION OR FOR INFORMATION: Key decision over £500k spend/save & impacts more than 2 wards

COMMITTEE: Children and Young People Committee

DATE: 22 January 2026

TITLE: Extension of the Home to School Travel Dynamic Purchasing System

Ward(s): Citywide

Officer presenting the report: Gail Rogers, Head of Children's Commissioning

Committee Chair: Councillor Christine Townsend

Executive Director lead: Hannah Woodhouse: Executive Director for Childrens and Education

Proposal origin: BCC Staff

Purpose of Report:

1. To seek approval for the extension of the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) contract used by the Home to School Travel Service to procure transport for children's travel to and from school. The extension takes up the option of two sets of one year and would be until December 2028.
2. To seek approval for a further £35M of spend to account for the increased demand within the service and to extend the contract up to 31st December 2028.

Evidence Base

1. Bristol City Council has a statutory duty to provide home to school travel for children resident in Bristol where they meet criteria defined by the Department for Education. The biggest category of eligibility is for children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), but there are other categories such as residing in temporary accommodation or distance from the nearest suitable school which also apply.
2. For many children, the duty to support their access to education is met through travel warrants or through offering a personal travel budget to parents/carers. However, around 85% of those with an EHCP do require travel through a commissioned vehicle, either because parents and carers are unable to take their children to school due to circumstances and commitments or because their nearest suitable school is at some distance from their home, and they would be unable to use public transport.

3. Compliant procurement requires a framework arrangement or contract to ensure equity, access and fairness within the market. The existing DPS was approved by Cabinet on 3rd March 2022 under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 within European legislation. Following Britain's exit from the European Union, this legislation has been superseded by the Procurement Act 2023. The new Act does not include the DPS as a framework for procurement, but we are permitted to extend any existing arrangements as long as this takes place by 23rd February 2026. The latest it can then run is until 23rd February 2029.
4. Approval values for our original DPS were £50M over a total of six years, with the contract set at:

Approved dates	Approved spend
1/1/23- 31/12/26	4 years £40m
1/1/27- 31/12/27 & 1/1/28- 31/12/28	2 years £10m
	Total £50M

5. Current spend is approximately £14 million per financial year and the total spend in 3 years is almost £40M, leaving an approved £10M. This increase is a result in additional demand as well as an increase in the cost of travel due to inflationary pressures in the market. The request seeks approval for a further £35 M up until 31st December 2028 enabling a maximum £45M of spend between 1st January 2026 and 31st December 2028.

Alternative options considered:

6. As Bristol has a statutory requirement to provide Home to School Travel, alternative options are limited due to the increasing numbers of children requiring support. The service has diversified over the last year and now operates an in-house electric fleet in order to reduce the reliance on external contractors and to bring down costs. Additionally, an in-house independent travel training service has been established to support young people to travel independently on public transport, reducing reliance on commissioned vehicles and Service support. Other initiatives are seeking to provide the service in the most efficient way possible, and has begun to impact the overall service spend.
7. Whilst there has been significant work to control spend, the demand for places continues to increase and is forecasted to do so further, in line with the number of children expected to be eligible for an EHCP. Delivering the Home to School Travel duty will always need a mixture of in-house resource and commissioned transport, and the procurement of contractors who can meet this need will always need to be via a legal process.
8. Under the new Procurement Act, the Dynamic Purchasing System has been replaced by 'Dynamic Markets'. The Service will need to tender under an alternative process at some point, but it is felt that whilst in the middle of a programme of transformation where many positive changes have been made, the preferred choice would be to take the available extensions and plan for a new process when all of the changes are embedded.

Officer Recommendations: -

That the Committee for Children

1. Approves the increase in value of additional £35M, subject to approval of the budget envelope at full council in February 2026, enabling a maximum £45M of spend between 1st January 2026 and 31st December 2028.
2. Authorises the Executive Director Children and Education in consultation with the Chair of the Children and Young People Committee to take all steps required to enact the contract extensions up to 31 December 2028 as set out in this report and subject to the increased budget envelope.

Corporate Strategy alignment:

1. Improving equity of outcomes in children's education by supporting attendance for those who cannot so easily access their setting.
2. Supporting children and families health and wellbeing – providing support to parents to get their child to school which may be a special setting outside of the local neighbourhood; enabling parents to continue to work to support their family when travel arrangements can be difficult and lengthy.

City Benefits:

The proposal allows children with a Special Educational Need and Disability to access the setting that best meets their need, even if that setting is not within their local community. The proposal supports families by recognising that parents are entitled to support for their child, and that this support must be of good quality, reliable and consistent. These measures then have an equalities impact on learning and on family life.

Consultation Details:

There is no requirement for formal consultation at this stage as the contract extension was specified as permissible within the original Cabinet decision in March 2022.

Background Documents:

[Home to School Travel DPS Framework Re-commission 3 March 2022](#)

Revenue Cost	£35M	Source of Revenue Funding	General Fund cc10481
Capital Cost	£0	Source of Capital Funding	N/A
One off cost <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing cost <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/> If yes - existing or new saving? OR Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	

Professional comments section:

Template approved October 25

1. Finance Advice: This report requests approval to extend the Dynamic Pricing System contract, used to procure Home to School Travel, until December 2028. This would commit up to £35 million from 1 January 2026 until 31 December 2028 in addition to the £10 million remaining from the previous approval of this contract.

The contract has spent c. £14 million in each of the three years of the contract thus far and is currently forecasting an underspend in 2025/26. The extension assumes that the budget for Home To School Travel will not be reduced in future years but, given this is not currently being discussed as part of budget setting and the council's statutory duty, this seems reasonable.

Finance Business Partner: Ben Hegarty, Finance Business Partner Children and Education, 11 December 2025.

2. Legal Advice: There are no specific legal implications arising as the contract extensions are provided for in the current agreement. No other changes to the contract are being proposed. The PCR 2015 will continue to apply to the DPS. Legal Services will assist with the formalities of the extension.

Legal Team Manager: Husinara Jones, Team Manager/Solicitor 3 December 2025

3. Implications on IT: I can see no implications on IT arising from this paper.

IT Team Leader: Alex Simpson, Lead Enterprise Architect 18 December 25

4. HR Advice: There are no direct HR implications arising from this report.

HR Partner: Matt Harmer, HR Business Partner, 19 December 2025

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal	NO
Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)	YES
Appendix C – Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	YES
Appendix D – Decision Risk Assessment	NO
Appendix E – Exempt Information	NO
Appendix F – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external	NO
Appendix G – Options appraisal matrix	NO
Appendix H – Business case / financial analysis	NO