A fundamental review of Community Transport is essential at this time especially in view of the impending integration of adult health and social care and also the Self Directed Support Act 2013.

Both of the above-noted issues will have a major bearing on how Community Transport is delivered in the future.

The current system of Community Transport is, in my opinion, characterised by the following issues (which are not prioritised):

- The Concordat signed between the Scottish Government and CoSLA heralded the end of ring-fencing for Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) funding and this may have diluted the status of DRT as a Council funding priority in many local authorities.
- An implication of the above-noted policy is that there are local Community Transport initiatives that are successful but these are not replicated across the country – this may lead to accusations of postcode prioritisation.
- There is a reliance on revenue funded Service Level Agreements (SLA) between the public and third sectors. These SLAs have no legal status and produce limited information to show whether value for money or satisfying service-user demand is being met.
- As noted above, the relationship between the public and third sectors is largely revenue based with no capital available for new vehicles. This has led to an ageing fleet of vehicles together with an increase in the maintenance burden and thus a risk to service delivery.
- The top-slicing of funding for, and the lack of SLAs relating to, the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) – Non Emergency Transport service is hampering efforts to share services insofar as the SAS is unwilling to yield budgets to either local authorities or the third sector to tackle journeys that it no longer sees as being part of its clinical model.
- There are, to my knowledge, no SLAs between Health Boards and the SAS so it is difficult, if not impossible, to assess whether best value is being achieved.
- SAS eligibility criteria is not published or wholly understood by local authorities and hence there is great difficulty in understanding why certain ambulance journey requests are now being rejected.
• The changing service profile for the SAS is not well understood amongst local authorities and changes are being made prior to ensuring full understanding is achieved.

• Community Transport must be seen in the overall context of initiatives such as Taxicard, Dial-a-ride and other local DRT schemes; it is so much more than operating a fleet of mini-buses.

• The Scottish Government follow-up report to Audit Scotland’s report on Access to Health and Social care is still outstanding. This should be published prior to any Committee inquiry.

SPECIFIC ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The under-noted issues must be addressed as part of the remedial action necessary to create a sound and affordable system of Community Transport across Scotland:

• A strategic stocktake should be taken of all funds, across the four sectors – public, private, third and independent, of monies spent annually on Community Transport – this should give clarity as to the level of investment and hopefully illustrate the paucity of good management information about what these sums actually buy.

• Standard definitions – the Community Transport arena must adopt standard definitions for terms such as ambulances, service-users, social and clinical journey.

• Transparent eligibility criteria – must be published and hence anyone eligible to travel has equal priority to do so (a recent SAS innovation).

• Educating public sector employees to avoid using transport as an afterthought and thus defaulting to expensive solutions.

• Non-ring-fencing of SAS monies must be considered to allow Health Boards to explore how best to allocate funds for patient travel and reduce the enormous spend on private ambulances.

• SLAs, as a minimum, or contracts preferably, should be developed between HBs and SAS to allow VFM to be judged and shared services opportunities to be explored.

• Self-Directed Support – the ability to implement the new legislative requirements must be “front and centre” for any proposed arrangements vis Community Transport arising from the inquiry.

• Expectation management around this inquiry will be crucial especially as funding for both revenue and capital is very tight indeed. Government statistics show that revenue funding levels will not recover back to 2010 levels until 2026.

• Contribution to air quality – it would be good to match the Scottish Government’s aspiration to create an Electric Vehicle Charging Network with a coherent pan-Scotland matched funding initiative to
introduce electric/hybrid/hydrogen or other alternative fuelled vehicles for Community Transport.

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