

POLICY AND RESEARCH WORKING GROUP MINUTES
11 APRIL 2007
DUNFERMLINE BUSINESS CENTRE

PRWG Members: John Moore, Chair
 Trevor Meadows
 Roderick McLeod

Also present: Ruth White – Secretariat

1. Welcome and Apologises

Apologises were received from Fiona McCall and Mairi O'Keefe. However Mairi has indicated that she will hopefully be back for the May meeting.

2. Minutes of previous minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting on 14 March 2007 were accepted without amendment.

3. Matters arising

Due to the changes in the secretariat Ruth White highlighted that her role would be to manage the PRWG's work loads in accordance with the agreed Work Programme. This would mean that the appropriate agenda points would be included on a monthly basis to ensure the group meets its objectives.

4. DHC Guidance on DRT services – update

The contract letters have been sent to Paul Beecham for the two pieces of work. Paul has indicated that his work will be submitted on time to both Trevor and John for their consideration.

The working group agreed to write to the SE to highlight the areas that a RTP needs to consider when setting up a DRT system. The letter will enclose a copy of Paul's work. The working group agreed that a similar letter should be sent to Transport with Care, which

should highlight the need for an integrated approach to running DRT (i.e. not one that focuses solely on Health or Social Work).

PRWG would like to invite someone the Transport Departments in the Scottish Executive to bi - monthly Working Group meetings to get updates about new policies that might impact on the work of MACS.

- **Action: Secretariat to draft two covering letters to accompany Paul Beecham's work. Letters to be sent to Basil Haddad, George Davidson cc to Diane McLafferty. Also draft a letter to Mike Martin and Alex Davidson.**
- **Action: Secretariat to circulate an up to date who's who for transport policy in the Scottish Executive.**
- **Action: Secretariat to invite a policy representative to the meeting in June/ July to inform the group of any policies that might affect the work of MACS.**

5. Audit Scotland Meeting

Audit Scotland provides audit services to two statutory auditors - The Auditor General and the Audit Commission.

The Auditor General, Mr Robert Black, is appointed by the Crown, is independent and reports to the Scottish Parliament. He is responsible for auditing the work of the Departments of SE, NHS Boards, Further Education Colleges, Scottish Water, various Non-Departmental Public Bodies such as Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Prison Service and Historic Scotland

The Audit Commission consists of between 6-12 commissioners, (currently 11) and is chaired by Alastair MacNish. It is independent of Local Councils and the Executive. It reports to Scottish Ministers. It audits Local Authorities and joint boards (eg Police and Fire Boards).

Audit Scotland carries out most of the audit work for both the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission, but some is carried out by private firms of auditors. For example Orkney Islands Council has Scott Moncrieff as its current external auditor.

Audit Scotland provides detailed reports and advice to the bodies it is auditing, and public reports are available on its website www.audit-scotland.gov.uk There is also a useful publication "Quick Guide to the Auditor General, Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland" at <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/audit/pdfs/quickguide.pdf>

Audit Scotland also publishes overview reports covering topics such as how a particular sector performs, or how well a particular service is provided across the whole country.

It is important to understand that auditing is more than the conventional check on the accuracy of accounts. Auditors of public bodies need to see that resources are used prudently, but also in accordance with the decisions of the organisation, and within the confines of the law. So, if a Council decided to significantly change the expenditure on a particular service the auditor would want to see the minuted decision, and then might want to see the report to members on which that decision was based. Further they might want to check that the resources had not been transferred from a statutory service to a discretionary one, or at least to check that there were still adequate resources left to carry out the statutory functions. The quality of governance is of great interest to auditors - as are issues like public performance reporting. Auditors are currently taking a great interest in risk and in performance management.

Auditors are interested in a concept which is supported by a report called "Following the Public Pound". This was co-written by Albert Tait who provided training to MACS last autumn. The key principles are that when a public body passes resources to another body (public, voluntary or private) it ensures two things. First it clearly understands why it is making the payment, and secondly that it assures itself that the money is spent by the external body in the way that it intended. In the past a Council might have given a large sum to a local community group because it "does good work". That sort of informal arrangement is no longer acceptable. Typically a payment to an external body of greater than that raised by a pound on the Council Tax (about £6,000 in Orkney) must be supported by a Service Level Agreement and adequate monitoring of the external body.

I have given the examples in relation to Local Authorities, but the same principles apply to other public bodies.

In relation to Transport, the Auditor General audits the Transport Department of SE, also, I think, Transport Scotland. There is an interesting report produced for the Auditor General "An overview of the performance of transport in Scotland" at <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/pdf/2006/06pf06ag.pdf>

The PRWG discussed a potential agenda for the meeting with Audit Scotland on 16 May. It was agreed that an introduction to MACS would be sent along with the agenda to Audit Scotland.

- **Action: Secretariat to pull together the draft agenda and introduction paragraph and circulate to members.**
- **Action: Once agreed sent to Audit Scotland.**
- **Action: Roderick to provide wording for minutes with background to Audit Scotland.**

6. Project Final Report – Actions required to bring about change and improve the mobility of disabled people in Scotland

PRWG discussed the paper that had been circulated. It was agreed by all members that this document although useful did not fully incorporate the original intention of the objective. This highlighted the need for a possible house style for MACS which should incorporate Plain English.

It was agreed that Ruth would look through the document and pull together headings which would highlight the gaps in research that currently exist. The resulting document would be used as a briefing paper for the Minister. A potential name for this document is 'Has Research moved the MACS Route Map Forward?'

- **Action: Secretariat to revise the paper and start formulating the new paper incorporating the views of the Group.**

Regional Transport Strategies

Eric Guthrie has not yet responded to the letter that PRWG sent on 28 February 2007. However the Secretariat has been in contact with Eric's PS who said that Eric was on annual leave until 10 April.

A letter has been received from Shetland Transport Partnership on 26 March 2007 indicating that they have taken on board the comments submitted by MACS. They will also be happy to work in partnership with MACS in the future.

The letter to the EOC was sent to the Minister on 4 April 2007.

- **Action: Secretariat to draft a letter to Shetland Transport Partnership in acknowledgment of their response. This letter should include information about the work being carried out by Paul Beecham.**
- **Action: Copy of letter to EOC to be included in the weekly update.**
- **Actions: Arrange meeting with COSLA in autumn.**

7. MACS Survey

The Group decided that the Guide Dogs methodology was a useful starting point. It was agreed that the group would scope the work themselves and that the Secretariat would review two current travel pattern documents. The review would then be circulated to the group for their comments. The review should concentrate on why people travel with the end focus of highlighting gaps.

- **Action: Secretariat to review the National Travel Survey and Focus on Travel for relevant points.**
- **Action: Summary of points to be circulated to the group for comment.**

8. Alternative methods of Assessing Eligibility for Concessionary Fares

The Evaluation specification and the Pilot specification had been circulated to the group and no comments had been returned. Further discussion on this point indicated that the Group are not content with

the advice from SE procurement. It was felt that procurement had the incorrect idea about the work the group wish to carry out. They wish to make it clear that they want to test a methodology rather than carry out a pilot. Therefore the evaluation would be ongoing with the actual work continually changing to ensure a useable final product.

- **Action: Secretariat to contact Sharon Glen to discuss the specification.**
- **Action: Secretariat to circulate response to Group for comment.**

Secretariat
April 2007