

CABINET

16 MARCH 2011

PARK & RIDE OPERATION REVIEW

REPORT OF HEAD OF ACCESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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RECENT REFERENCES:

[CAB 1916](#) - Park & Ride bus contract – results of tendering for new contract, parking prices and leasing of the site – 5 November 2009

[CAB1843](#) – South of Winchester Park & Ride – Contract & Operational Details – 21 May 2009

[CAB1794](#) - Winchester Town Access Plan And South Of Winchester Park & Ride - 4 February 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report reviews the first year of operation of the new park and ride service introduced in April 2010 in conjunction with the opening of the new 'South' Winchester car park. It considers the operational issues that have arisen and the performance of the service. The conclusion is that the service has proved successful so far and achieved the desired outcomes. No significant changes are suggested other than the creation of an additional stop on Romsey Road to serve the local employment sites.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the success of the new park and ride operation in delivering a key part of the Council's parking strategy is noted.
2. That there is no increase in the level of charges for the Park and Ride service for the financial year 2011-12.
3. That officers liaise with both Hampshire County Council and Stagecoach with a view to creating a new Park and Ride bus stop at the Kings Road/Romsey Road junction subject to the inclusion and promotion of the service as part of a travel plan for the site.
4. That the free parking availability after 4pm and the 3hr' ticket on Saturdays, for the price of £1.50 for the East car parks (St Catherine's and Barfield) is retained.
5. That the income from parking charges is reviewed in September 2011 to determine whether any surplus over income target could cover the costs of extra pre-Christmas park and ride services.
6. That a further report is brought to Cabinet in 2012 on the first two years operation of the service.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report reviews the operation of the new Park and Ride (P&R) service which began on 19 April 2010 in conjunction with the opening of the new 'South' Winchester car park. It considers the operational issues arising from the first year of operation and considers whether any changes should be recommended to Cabinet.

2 Detail

- 2.1 The operation of the new P&R service began on 19 April 2010 in conjunction with the opening of the new 'South' Winchester car park. This increased the total number of spaces available from 785 to 1650.
- 2.2 The maximum number of cars parked across the P&R sites (including the temporary Hampshire County Council (HCC) car park) continues to grow; from an average of 600 prior to opening of the new site to 1,190 vehicles in May and 1,370 in November (these figures are based on a mixture of vehicle counts and ticket sales). This is in excess of the initial anticipated daily demand. Data from the bus operator shows that the service is carrying in excess of 13,000 passenger trips every week.
- 2.3 Despite initial concerns over using Romsey Road for the bus route, journey times have proved to be very reliable and under normal circumstances allow buses to keep closely to the advertised timetables. It is thought that this can be attributed to both a reduction in cars on Romsey Road (predominantly hospital staff who are now using P&R) and the effect of traffic control changes at the Chilbolton Avenue and Stanmore Lane junctions.
- 2.4 HCC has undertaken some monitoring before and after the introduction of the new P&R operation and has indicated that both journey times and traffic volumes have decreased on both the Romsey Road and Stockbridge Road which is a very encouraging result.
- 2.5 There were some initial problems with ticket machines accepting smart cards at the new South Winchester car park, but these issues have now been resolved and feedback from users is good, particularly from those with season tickets who can avoid the need to purchase a daily ticket.

- 2.6 The new P&R service incorporates evening operation, extending the service from 19:30 to 21:30. This has allowed users to stay later in town, use the service in conjunction with the rail travel to London, and is helpful for later shift workers at the hospital. Initial surveys have indicated that this evening service is not yet generally well patronised, and this will be promoted to improve the awareness and use of this part of the service. The evening service did appear to be better utilised by visitors during the summer.
- 2.7 Requests have been made for a new P&R bus stop on Romsey Road adjacent to the Kings Road site. HCC occupies various buildings at this location and would like a bus stop nearby to cater for staff members and visitors. It is thought that the benefits of a stop at this location would rely on the service being promoted through a site specific travel plan. Therefore subject to appropriate agreements with Stagecoach and HCC it is recommended that a P&R stop be installed at Kings Road. It will probably be necessary not to allow school children to use the service as there are concerns about passenger capacity and there are other suitable commercial services available for them to use. This can be specified in the operating agreement with Stagecoach if this proves to be a problem.
- 2.8 A small number of rail commuters have asked for the service to start at 6:30am so they can catch earlier trains. This has significant cost implications in view of the fact that demand is likely to be very low and income is unlikely to be sufficient to offset the additional cost of contracting the bus service. In current financial circumstances it is not recommended to pursue this option at this time.

3 Ticketing, Charging & Discounts

- 3.1 The system of charging for P&R continues to be based on a daily fee for parking each vehicle. The machine issues two tickets, one of which is to cover the parking, the other covers the use of the bus service from and back to the car park by those in the vehicle (all passengers in the vehicle are covered to travel on the bus within the cost of the parking). Winchester is unusual in adopting this approach (most services are based on free parking with a travel fee paid by each occupant) but it is considered the best option for Winchester's circumstances and does more to promote car sharing than the alternative system.
- 3.2 The current daily fee is £3.00. A 'smart' card ticket fee of £2.70 per day allows the equivalent of a 10% discount on the standard daily fee. In April 2010, a season ticket was introduced at an annual cost of £552. This fee equates to £2.40 per day and is priced to reflect the agreed level of discounts set against the daily fee.
- 3.3 As part of the new P&R operation, further discounts have been offered to large employers block booking large numbers of tickets on behalf of staff or visitors. Block bookings have been taken up by the Hospital, the University and the County Council. This provides economies of scale for these employers and guaranteed revenue for the Council.

- 3.4 In addition to their 'block booked' P&R season tickets the County Council continue to operate their own P&R car park, which was not envisaged during the planning of the new service. Further discussions are on going about the future of this car park and this issue is discussed elsewhere in this report.
- 3.5 Traditionally the Winchester Park and Ride has focused on commuter parking. However, the completion of the new site has provided an additional 860 spaces and despite a good initial demand, continues to have a surplus of parking spaces, and more importantly, spare capacity outside the peak hours. Therefore it is proposed to retain the 'off-peak' charge for people using the service after 10.30 am as this continues to offer a good incentive to shoppers and visitors to use the service and possibly stay longer in the town. The fee for this service should remain unchanged at £2.00 as this is a similar level or less than parking in town for two hours.
- 3.6 In the 'East Car Parks (St Catherine's and Barfield), there is a ticket option that allows the issue of a 'free' ticket after 4pm. This facility was provided to support the Winchester Sports Stadium by providing free car parking adjacent to the facility. It is proposed to retain the 'free' parking facility.
- 3.7 In the East Car Parks (St Catherine's and Barfield), there is a ticket option that allows the issue of a '3hr' ticket on Saturdays, for the price of £1.50. Again this facility was initially developed to support the Winchester Sports Stadium, but is also being used for short trips into town. Whilst there is no such facility in the 'South' car park, the location of the East car parks makes this a convenient option to encourage short town visits using P&R and it is not proposed to alter this facility.

4 Additional Park and Ride Services

- 4.1 In response to the anticipated additional demands on the P&R operation on the four weekends before Christmas 2010 extra services were organised.
- 4.2 On each of the four Saturdays leading up to Christmas, an extra 'shuttle' bus ran continuously between 'East' Winchester car parks and The Broadway in addition to the normal full service. On these Sundays two 'shuttle' buses ran a free service every ten minutes between 'East' Winchester car parks and The Broadway, where as normally there is not a Sunday P&R service, reflecting the fact that until recently all Sunday parking was free in Winchester
- 4.3 Both of the additional services were very well used, providing key additional capacity at a reasonable cost. Using a double-decker bus for the additional Saturday service cost £350 each day of operation, and the Sunday service operated at a cost of £675 per day and the service was run at no charge to the users due to funding from Winchester 'BID'.
- 4.4 It is hoped to run similar services prior to Christmas 2011, however no source of income has yet been identified. It is intended to review the level of income from parking later in the year. If there is any surplus over income target then Members may wish to consider whether some part of that could be used to provide additional Sunday P&R services.
- 4.5 Over the last year the service has been used in conjunction with a number of extra-ordinary events including the Hat fair, the Fire Fighters memorial service,

and the Returning Troops parade. All of these created extra, but unpredictable demands, on the service. As it was not possible to forecast the scale and timing of any additional demands, no additional bus services were contracted. Whilst the demands were considerably higher than the average daily patronage the service coped well in all instances and this is considered to set a useful marker for any similar future event.

5.0 Hampshire County Council Car Park

- 5.1 Hampshire County Council continues to operate a car park adjacent to the household waste recycling centre on Bar End Road which can accommodate 250 cars. HCC staff use this car park and walk to the St Catherine's car park to catch the park and ride buses. The arrangement is not seen as ideal as it was originally understood that the HCC car park would close upon the opening of the new 'South' Winchester car park.
- 5.2 The car park is operated under a temporary permission, which was first extended by one year in 2010, and HCC have recently applied for an extension for a further two years.
- 5.3 The current understanding between WCC and HCC is that the staff parking in the HCC car park can use the WCC contracted park and ride buses. This has been on the proviso that HCC procure additional 'peak hour' buses to provide additional capacity for the park & ride facility.
- 5.4 The additional buses originally provided four additional peak hour buses per hour between 7:30am & 9:30am and 4pm & 6pm. These services ran from the St Catherine's and Barfield sites only and effectively increase the peak hour service from six buses to ten buses per hour. From the 1 November 2010, HCC reduced their funding available and this reduced their additional peak hour buses from four to two in the morning peak and from ten to six additional afternoon peak hour buses.
- 5.5 The effect of the loss of these buses has caused some capacity problems on other peak hour buses (reported by complaints from users), but it is too early to fully understand the effect and the situation will be monitored. The City Council will continue to work with the County Council ensure that the Park and Ride operates effectively for all users.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

6 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CORPORATE CHANGE PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 6.1 The proposals accord with the corporate priority for safeguarding our high quality environment.
- 6.2 There are considerable environmental benefits as a result of the introduction of the new park and ride services, particularly in relation to the reduction in cars entering the Town centre and hence their impact on the Air Quality Management Area and the Council's Climate Change Strategy. A report has been compiled by HCC drawing upon monitoring information from a variety of

sources and sets out the impacts of the new Park and Ride scheme. This is available as a background paper to this report.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 There are significant budget implications associated with the operation of Winchester's Park & Ride service. The main cost is the bus contract which requires buses to serve all sites, which are all to a low emission standard, operate over a much longer route and include evening operation.
- 7.2 The annual cost of the Park and Ride service is primarily a combination of the contracted bus service and maintenance of the car parks which is then offset by the income received from the users of the service.
- 7.3 In CAB 1916 it was estimated that the net additional annual operating cost would be around £300,000 per annum. This was after subtracting projected income levels and taking into account the lower level of anticipated income from central car parks as a result of people switching to the new park and ride service. It was agreed by Cabinet that this sum would have to be accommodated within the overall parking account. This figure was additional to the net operating cost of the service of the previous P&R operation of around £100,000 per annum.
- 7.4 Early monitoring of ticket sales and income indicated that the Park and Ride is generating slightly more patronage and income than had been previously envisaged. However, because data is only available first nine months of operation (May 2010 to January 2011) and patronage figures have shown continuous growth it is not yet clear what the actual levels of income are likely to be. However, if usage continues to exceed the anticipated initial demands then the net cost of the service would be less than allowed for in previous Cabinet reports.
- 7.5 Whilst in the prevailing financial climate it is essential to minimise expenditure, the service should be viewed as an integral part of the access strategy for Winchester supporting the Vision for Winchester of economic prosperity and a high quality environment. The operation of a successful Park and Ride service cannot be judged solely on whether it can be done at minimum cost to the Authority. It is about running a service which can be seen to have environmental benefits for the town. Charges for the use of P&R must therefore be set in context with other car parking charges as set out in this report for the central car parks.
- 7.6 In terms of the discount levels offered, it has been important in the initial stages to offer discounts to encourage use of the new P&R operation. However, the significant levels of discounts offered may not be sustainable in the longer term and these will need to be the subject of a future review.
- 7.7 A further review of the P&R service will be brought to Cabinet after another full year's use of the new operation has allowed patronage levels to become established and stable.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 8.1 There is always a risk that people will not continue to pay to park in Winchester if prices rise beyond a level which is considered to be reasonable and therefore in the current economic climate it is not planned to increase the fee levels for the park and ride. However, in the near future it will be more important to review the level of discount offered for bulk purchase, as it is these discounts which may not be sustainable in the longer term.
- 8.2 In relation to the operation of the park and ride service there is a risk that people may switch back to previous or town centre locations. The central car park charges are aimed at encouraging people to use the park and ride service and the pricing differentials in place should continue to help encourage this behaviour.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Park & Ride Monitoring report

APPENDICES

None