

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

11 SEPTEMBER 2013

WINCHESTER TOWN EVENING BUS SERVICE

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (BUILT ENVIRONMENT)

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RECENT REFERENCES:

WTF179 - Winchester Night Bus – 12 September 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report considers the late evening bus service linking the City Centre with Badger Farm, Stanmore, Weeke and Harestock which is currently supported by a financial contribution from the Town A/C.

The service has now been running for 12 months and a decision needs to be made about its future and, in particular, whether the Forum wishes to continue funding the service for another year i.e. to September 2014.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Forum considers the first year of operation in terms of passenger figures using the Winchester Night Bus and decide if further funding should be allocated to run the service for a second year.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Town Forum made provision in its 2012/13 budget for a recurring annual £10,000 budget to fund a late evening service between the city centre and Badger Farm, Stanmore, Weeke and Harestock on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays only. The timetable is set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Hampshire County Council, on behalf of the City Council, sought tenders for the provision of the service based on a two year initial period of operation. Stagecoach Bus was awarded the contract in September 2012 to run the service at a cost of £12,804 per annum. The three Hampshire County Councillors for the Winchester area used their allocated County Council budgets to make up the shortfall in funding of £2,804. It was agreed that the contract for the service would run for 1 year with the option of a second year hence the need to review the position now.
- 1.3 The service has now been in operation for 12 months. Passenger numbers over the last year show that between 5 and 7 passengers per trip on average are using the service. Over the course of the year around 5300 people in total will have used the night bus. This equates to around £2.40 per passenger trip. Hampshire County Council use a bench mark of £1.67 per passenger trip when considering which services they should prioritise for funding.
- 1.4 Officers have discussed the service with Hampshire County Council and Stagecoach bus. The bus service / timetable have worked well. The numbers of users has not, however, grown to a level which could make it commercially viable. A second year of operation with additional promotion, in particular joint working/ marketing through the University, may generate additional passenger numbers.
- 1.5 However, it is improbable that use of the bus will increase to a level which would make it commercially viable so continuation will require on-going financial support from the Forum for the next year and indeed beyond this period should the service operate after September 2014. Hampshire County Council has advised that it is not able to provide any funding for the second year and funding from other sources is unlikely. Consequently, if there is no further support from HCC members' individual budgets, the entire cost of

operating the service will fall to the Forum (c£13,200). If County members are however prepared to provide some support in year 2 the cost to the Forum will be reduced by the sum of any contributions they agree to make. At the time of drafting this report a response had been received from one of the three County Councillors who had advised that she would not be willing to provide financial support for the service. The position with the other members will be up-dated at the meeting.

- 1.6 The overall financial picture is that there is sufficient Forum funding to operate the service to December but a further £3k would need to be found from this year's budget (13/14) to operate the bus to March 2014. Provision has been made in the budget for 14/15 which would fund the service until the end of the second year of the contract (September 2014). In the event that the Forum wishes to continue to support the night bus after this time consideration needs to be given as to how this would be funded going forwards.
- 1.7 It should also be noted that an inflationary increase of 2.8% in the contract price is due from 20th September 2013. Given the limited use of the service in year 1 the Forum needs to consider whether continuing to support the night bus represents good value for money and, if it does, how the service will be funded given its other commitments.
- 1.8 A 56 day notice is required to be given to the Traffic Commissioner if it is decide to terminate the service which if served in September would mean that the service would cease to operate at the end of November to extend the service for a further 12 months the Forum will have to consider allocating further funding to the scheme.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

2 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 2.1 The service will contribute towards Community and Economic objectives by providing a service which local people can use to access restaurants and Public Houses thus benefitting the evening economy and improving accessibility.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 3.1 The total cost of the 3 loop service will be £12,804 for the first year of operation (20th September 2012 to 19th September 2013). It should also be noted that an inflationary increase of 2.8% in the contract price is due from 20 September 2013.
- 3.2 There is an annual recurring budget of £10,000 within the Town A/C. The forecast annual cost of the service, including inflation, to the end of March 2014 (2013/14) is £13,000. Therefore either a further £3,000 of budget (or external funding) would need to be identified or the service would need to stop by the end of December 2013.

- 3.3 The long term future of the service (and the certainty of any future external contributions) will need to be considered alongside the budget process which will ultimately recommend a Town budget to Cabinet in January 2014.

4 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 The funding is provided so that this service can be run over a two year period. It is hoped that it will be popular and well used. Revenues from fares are retained by the bus operator and this is factored into the assessment of the contract price. Discontinuing the service could impact upon the city's night time economy and users of the service albeit the impact is likely to be low given the limited use of the service in year 1.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Passenger surveys

APPENDIX - TIMETABLE

Winchester, Bus Station	2210	2310	0010
City Road	2213	2313	0013
Dean Lane Corner Harestock, March Hare	2217	2317	0017
Dean Lane Corner	2222	2322	0022
City Road	2226	2326	0026
Winchester, Bus Station	2230	2330	0030
	2233	2333	0033

5A**Winchester - Badger Farm - Stanmore -
Winchester****Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays**

<i>Train arrival from London</i>	2133	2233	2333
Winchester, Bus Station	2135	2235	2335
City Road	2138	2238	2338
County Hospital	2142	2242	2342
Battery Hill	2144	2244	2344
Badger Farm, Sainsbury's	2149	2249	2349
Stanmore Lane (Keble Street)	2154	2254	2354
Cromwell Road, Post Office	2157	2257	2357
Winchester, Bus Station	2203	2303	0003