

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

27 June 2016

WINCHESTER EVENING BUS SERVICES UPDATE

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (ENVIRONMENT)

Contact Officer: Simon Finch Tel No: 01962 848271

RECENT REFERENCES:

WTF238 – Winchester Evening Bus Services Up-date 9th March 2016.

WTF216– Winchester Evening Bus Services Update – 11 March 2015

WTF203 - Winchester Town Evening Bus Service Update - 25 June 2014

WTF201 – Winchester Town Evening Bus Service – 12 March 2014

WTF194 – Winchester Evening Bus Service – 11 September 2013

WTF179 – Winchester Night Bus – 12 September 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

On 25 June 2014 the Town Forum resolved to support the continuation of the evening bus service beyond September 2014 for a further period of 2 years (WTF203). An up-date on the use of the service was also considered in March 2015 (WTF216). The current service is due to end in September this year. At the last meeting of the Forum held on 9 March 2016 it was resolved in principle that the Forum should support the continuation of the Winchester Evening Bus Service beyond September 2016, when the current contract expires, and Hampshire County Council were authorised to tender the service for two or three years based upon the service provided by the current contract.

Hampshire County Council duly tendered the service, with a slightly revised timetable (see paragraphs 1.4 to 1.6 below), and three operators submitted bids. . The Town Forum now needs to decide whether to accept the lowest bid and to

therefore commit to funding the service for a further period of two years (with the option of an extension of 12 months) commencing in September 2016 when the current contract ends. Assuming the Forum resolves to support the night bus service the funding decision for the 3/5A services will need to get HCC's Executive Member for Environment & Transport's permission to award the tender with a meeting to be held on 22 July 2016. This should be a formality but is still needed for procurement reasons. The service cannot continue without this agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Forum:

- 1 That the Forum notes the bids received and decides whether to commit to fund the continuation of the night bus service for a further period of 2 years (with the option of extending the contract for a further period of 12 months) commencing September 2016 (subject to HCC's Executive Member for Environment & Transport's agreement).

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Town Forum first decided in 2012 to support an evening bus service between the city centre and Badger Farm, Stanmore, Weeke and Harestock on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays and has subsequently made provision for this in its budgets since 2012/13. It has earmarked c£13,800 in its 16/17 budget for this purpose. However the current contract expires in September this year so the Forum needs to decide whether it wants to continue supporting the night bus after this date.
- 1.2 In March 2016 the Forum resolved to support, in principle, the continuation of the service for a further 2 year period (beyond September 2016) and asked Hampshire County Council (HCC) to tender the service on this basis.
- 1.3 HCC tendered the service following the last Forum meeting and three operators submitted bids. These were considered on price with Stagecoach (existing operator) submitting the lowest bid (cost £12,392 per annum). The two other operators' bids were considerably more expensive. The cost of Stagecoach continuing to run the service is in line with the c£13,800 budget set for 2016/17 and is actually less than the current cost of £13,408 per annum. Historically HCC evaluated bids of this type on 80% cost and 20% quality basis. However no operators are included in their procurement framework unless they are considered capable of providing a service.
- 1.4 However it should be noted that whilst the overall cost is lower by more than £1,000 per annum the number of services supported by the Forum is less than has been the case to date in so much as the latest tender did not include the 22.15 bus for the No.3 and 21.40 bus for the 5A. The reasons for this are explained below.
- 1.5 In autumn 2015 Stagecoach launched a branded 'Kings City' bus service, which sought to replace and develop evening bus services which were previously subsidised by Hampshire County Council. The County Council now has adopted the policy of not supporting evening bus services. The latest services tendered for under the 'night bus' contract are ostensibly those which would not be operated by Stagecoach on a commercial basis.

- 1.6 In the previous night-bus tendering exercise six bus journeys were included , running three days a week (Thurs, Fri & Sat) where as the current tendering exercise has been based on four bus journeys, running three days a week (Thurs, Fri & Sat). The reason for this is that the incumbent operator is endeavouring to run their 'last' buses on a commercial basis on Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday and therefore the presumption is that the same would apply for Thursday, Friday and Saturday (the 22.15 bus for the No.3 and 21.40 bus for the 5A). In reality, should the Forum not fund the night bus operation as tendered, the operator may choose to review the whole evening operation for these routes and make more substantial reductions than just the tendered and supported night-bus services.
- 1.7 If the Forum therefore resolves to run the service for a further two years it is recommended that Stagecoach be awarded the contract because their bid was the lowest by a substantial margin and falls within the budget allocation in the Town Account for 16/17 of c£13,800.. Furthermore they have operated the existing service effectively since September 2012 and run many other bus services in the city including the Council's Park & Ride service.
- 1.8 Assuming the Forum resolves to support the night bus service the funding decision for the 3/5A will need to get HCC's Executive Member for Environment & Transport's permission to award the tender This should be a formality but is still needed for procurement reasons. The service cannot continue without this agreement.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

2 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO 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 A c£13,800 recurring annual budget has been approved for the night bus service in the Winchester Town Account budget for 16/17. The contract would run for two years from September 2016 with the option of an extension for a further period of 12 months (unless either party decides to terminate early) and will be subject to inflationary uplifts which are already included in the Town Account budget projections beyond 2016/17.
- 3.2 The cost of the service of £12,392 per annum, based on the lowest bid, is well within this budget provision.

4 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 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 the service. There is also a risk that some existing services on the 3 and 5A routes which have previously been supported by the Town Forum would not operate after September 2016 as the new tender did not include the 22.15 bus for the No.3 and 21.40 bus for the 5A. The operator runs these services Mondays to Wednesdays on a commercial basis.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A - Proposed timetable.

Night Bus Services - 3 Winchester - Harestock - Winchester

Direction of stops: where shown (eg: W-bound) this is the compass direction towards which the bus is pointing when it stops

	ThFS	ThFS*
Winchester, Bus Station (Stand D)	2315	0015
Winchester, City Road (Stop Rb)	2318	0018
Weeke, Dean Lane Corner (NW-bound)	2322	0022
Harestock, o/s The March Hare	2327	0027
Weeke, Dean Lane Corner (SE-bound)	2331	0031
Winchester, City Road (stop Rd)	2335	0035
Winchester, Bus Station (Stand D)	2238	0038

Service Restrictions:**ThFS - Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays only**

Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays No service

Sundays and Bank Holidays: No service

Notes: * - Part or all of this journey operates in the morning of the following day

5A Winchester - Badger Farm - Stanmore - Winchester

Direction of stops: where shown (eg: W-bound) this is the compass direction towards which the bus is pointing when it stops

	ThFS	ThFS*
Winchester, Bus Station (Stand E)	2240	2340
Winchester, City Road (Stop Ra)	2243	2343
Winchester, Royal Hampshire County Hospital (W-bound)	2247	2347
Badger Farm, Elder Close (E-bound)	2252	2352
Badger Farm, nr Sainsburys	2254	2354
Stanmore, Queens Mead (SE-bound)	2259	2359
Stanmore, adj Cromwell Shops	2302	0002
Winchester, Bus Station (Stand E)	2308	0008

Service Restrictions:**ThFS - Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays only**

Sundays and Bank Holidays: No service

Notes: * - Part or all of this journey operates in the morning of the following day