

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

12 March 2014

WINCHESTER TOWN EVENING BUS SERVICE

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (BUILT ENVIRONMENT)

Contact Officer: Simon Finch Tel No: 01962 848271

RECENT REFERENCES:

WTF179 - Winchester Night Bus – 12 September 2012

WTF194 – Winchester Evening Bus Service – 11 September 2013.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report considers the future beyond September 2014 of the late evening bus service linking the City Centre with Badger Farm, Stanmore, Weeke and Harestock (the night bus).

In 2012 the Forum agreed to help fund a night bus service and, following the tendering process carried out by Hampshire County Council, a contract was awarded to Stagecoach. The period of operation was for 12 months commencing in September of that year with the option of extending the service under the contract for a further year.

In September 2013 the Forum considered a report relating to the operation of the service in its first 12 months and agreed to fund the night bus for a second year. The existing contract expires in September 2014.

The Forum now needs to decide whether to continue funding the night bus after the current contract with Stagecoach ends later this year. If the Forum resolves to do this it is recommended that Hampshire County Council be authorised to tender the service in order to obtain details of costs associated with supporting the service after September 2014. A final decision can then be made by the Forum at its meeting on 26 June 2014.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the Forum considers the operation of the service to date in terms of the number of passengers using the Winchester Night Bus and decides whether in principle it intends to support the continuation of the service after September 2014 when the current contract expires.
2. In the event that the Forum agrees to support the principle of operating the night bus beyond September 2014, Hampshire County Council be authorised to tender the service for a period of 2 or 3 years based upon the service provided for by the current contract.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Town Forum 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 made provision for this in its budgets for 12/13 and 13/14. The timetable is set out in Appendix A. It has also earmarked £13k in its 14/15 budget for this purpose. However the current contract expires in September this year so the Forum needs to decide whether it intends, in principle, to continue supporting the night bus after this date.
- 1.2 As reported to the Forum at its meeting in September 2013, it is improbable that use of the night bus will increase to a level which would make it commercially viable, so continuation of the service beyond September 2014 will require on-going financial support from the Forum. Hampshire County Council has advised that it is not able to provide any funding and funding from other sources is unlikely. Last year, the Chairman of the Forum did ask Littleton & Harestock and Badger Farm parish councils whether they would be willing to provide some financial support for the night bus but they have decided against contributing to the costs of the service. As a result the future costs of supporting the service will rest with the Forum.
- 1.3 Continuation of a night bus service in the city would need to be subject of a new contract which can be arranged by Hampshire County Council. If therefore the Forum is minded to look at supporting the service after September 2014, it is recommended that the County Council be authorised to carry out the tendering process now so that future costs associated with night bus contract are known and can be reported back at the next meeting of the Forum on 25 June 2014. The Forum will then be able to make an informed decision as to whether it wants to commit to funding the continuation of the service after September for a further period of time (2 or 3 years is suggested). The tendering process can be carried out on the basis of operating the existing service (route and timetable) or it would also be possible to seek tenders for other options at the same time. As, generally speaking, the current service provided has seemingly worked well, it is not suggested that major changes need to be considered at this time.
- 1.4 The service has now been in operation for 16 months and details of passenger numbers up to mid January 2014 are included at Appendix B. The night bus is used by about 5500 people per annum with the most popular

services being run on Friday evenings. Average passenger numbers per journey range from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 10. Overall the 5A averages 7 passengers per journey compared to 5 passengers for the 3. The use of the service has not increased significantly since it began in September 2012. The table also shows that the cost per passengers' journey increased slightly in 2013 (£2.37) compared to 2012 (£2.31). This illustrates that the service is very unlikely to prove commercial viable as mentioned above. This means that the continued operation of the night bus beyond September 2014 will almost inevitably require continuing financial support from the Forum.

- 1.5 It should be noted that Hampshire County Council is just entering a consultation period with a view to reducing its financial support for public bus services, including early evening services. This could impact on patronage and the cost of provision of the late evening services, but these effects cannot yet be quantified.

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 None at this stage as the decision to continue supporting the night bus beyond September 2014 will be taken at a subsequent meeting of the Forum in June when the costs of the new contract will be known following the outcome of the tendering process. £13k has been allocated for the night bus service in the Winchester Town Account budget for 14/15.

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 of the service in year 1.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Passenger surveys

APPENDICES:

A - Existing Service Timetable

B - Passenger Numbers

APPENDIX A- 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

APPENDIX B – PASSENGER NUMBERS**Hampshire County Council****Passenger numbers on Winchester Late evening bus tender**Based on first 69 weeks of
operation

20 September 2012 to 11 January 2014

Day		2210 ser. 3	2310 ser 3	0010 ser 3	2135 ser 5A	2235 ser 5A	2335 ser 5A		
Thursdays	Lowest	0	0	0	2	0	0		
	Highest	15	14	19	16	17	14		
	Average	5	5	2	7	5	4		
Fridays	Lowest	0	0	0	1	0	0		
	Highest	26	19	19	19	24	23		
	Average	7	6	5	8	7	10		
Saturdays	Lowest	0	0	0	0	0	0		
	Highest	20	15	14	26	23	19		
	Average	6	4	4	7	7	7		
	<u>Summary of passenger totals</u>								
Thursdays	68 weeks *	329	324	150	803	489	345	296	Total 1130
Fridays	69 weeks	492	408	300	1200	562	486	653	1701
Saturdays	69 weeks	433	280	258	<u>971</u>	493	513	472	<u>1478</u>
					<u>2974</u>				<u>4309</u>

Combined Total	Annualised	
1933	1450	(x 51 weeks)
2901	2218	(x 52 weeks)
<u>2449</u>	<u>1873</u>	(x 52 weeks)
<u>7283</u>	<u>5541</u>	

Service 3: average 5
passengers
per
journey

Service 5A: average 7 passengers
per
journey

Services 3 and 5A combined:
average 5.9 passengers per journey
cost per passenger trip £2.31 @ Sep 2012
price
cost per passenger trip £2.37 @ Sep 2013
price

* - no service Thur 26.12.13

CMW 03.03.14