

CABINET (TRAFFIC AND PARKING) COMMITTEE

21 FEBRUARY 2012

PARK & RIDE OPERATION REVIEW

REPORT OF HEAD OF ACCESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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RECENT REFERENCES

[CAB2240](#) – Car Parking Charges & Operation Review – 9 November 2011

[CAB2130](#) – Park & Ride Operation Review – 16 March 2011

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

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report reviews the operation of the park and ride service since changes were introduced in April 2010 in conjunction with the opening of the new facility at South Winchester.

It considers the performance of the service and the operational issues that have arisen. Whilst the overall picture of use is very impressive, the report suggests that the level of service provided in the evenings has too high a cost relative to its usage and that an amended bus service should be put into operation, bringing about an associated reduction in contract cost.

It is also concluded that there is opportunity to encourage greater level of use services by improved integration of the bus service with the rail timetable.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. That the ongoing success of the Park and Ride operation in delivering a key part of the Council's Parking Strategy be noted.
2. That the new Park and Ride timetable as shown on Appendix 1 of the report be implemented with effect from May 2012.
3. That the revised contract cost details as set out in Paragraph 2.7 of the report be agreed.
4. That the increased saving achieved of £8,118 above the budget target of £30,000 approved in CAB2240 (total saving achieved £38,118), be allocated to cover future additional ad-hoc bus services, should they be required, as has been necessary this financial year.

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### PARK & RIDE OPERATION REVIEW

### REPORT OF HEAD OF ACCESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

#### DETAIL:

##### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report reviews the operation of the Park and Ride (P&R) service which was revised in April 2010 in conjunction with the opening of the South Winchester car park. It considers the operational issues arising from the first two years of operation and considers whether any changes should be undertaken.
- 1.2. Operation of the revised P&R service began on 19 April 2010 with the opening of the new car park, increasing the total number of spaces from 785 to 1650.
- 1.3. The service has been very successful in attracting a large number of users. On an average day it carries between 2,500 and 3,000 passenger trips. This equates to over three quarters of a million passenger journeys a year. On peak shopping days before Christmas it is estimated that the daily patronage exceeded 8,000 passenger trips. On a number of days passenger demands exceeded bus capacity and additional buses were provided.
- 1.4. The 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 2010 to 1,370 in November 2010 and 1,500 in December 2012 (these figures are based on a mixture of data from vehicle counts and ticket sales).
- 1.5. The cost of P&R operations was considered at Cabinet in November 2011 as part of the annual parking charges review (CAB 2240 refers) which recommended: "That discussions be undertaken with Stagecoach regarding potential cost savings from amendments and improvements to the park and ride service .....and that a further report be made to Cabinet in 2012"
- 1.6. Charges for use of the P&R service are set in relation to town centre charges so that the maximum all day fee of £3 is half that of the cheapest all day parking in the town centre. As there are no plans to increase the cost of all day parking in Winchester, it was agreed by Cabinet (CAB2240) that there would be no changes to P&R tickets other than a small increase in the 'off-peak' ticket available after 10.30 am. The introductory fee of £2 per vehicle had been reviewed in comparison with town centre parking and it was agreed that the fee will increase to £2.50 from April 2012. It is estimated that this proposal will generate approximately an additional £20k per annum.

## 2. Detail – Revised Operation

- 2.1. When the new service started in April 2010, the hours of operation were increased to allow for an extended evening service finishing at 21.30 rather than 19.30 as previously. This evening operation has only been partially successful in gaining patronage: surveys now show that after 20.30, the use of the service is very low, with average loadings of only one or two passengers per bus.
- 2.2. The current P & R operation allows for the first bus service to arrive at Winchester Railway Station at 07.15. This does not tie in well with four of the key early morning peak train services to London Waterloo leaving Winchester at 06.48, 06.55, 07.05 and 07.18. Some re-timing of the early morning bus services could be achieved which would allow better integration between the bus and rail services, and allow increased use of the park and ride by rail commuters.
- 2.3. It was therefore proposed and agreed (CAB2240 refers) that discussions be undertaken in conjunction with Stagecoach (the service provider) and key employers whose staff utilise the services, with a view to rationalising the evening and early morning services to both improve the level of service and reduce the contract cost. It was also agreed that the outcome of discussions with the service provider be reported back to Cabinet in early 2012.
- 2.4. An amended timetable has been developed in conjunction with Stagecoach, and this is attached at Appendix 1. The amended timetable does allow for the better integration with early morning rail services (as set out in paragraph 2.2 above), and it has also been set to allow better connections with the arrival of the evening fast services from London Waterloo. In view of the capacity constraints for parking at Winchester station it is hoped that this improved Park & Ride & Train service can be promoted to a wider market of users.
- 2.5. The amended timetable does include a number of service reductions in line with the acknowledged reduced demand for the evening buses. The service would therefore run at a 30 minute frequency during the evening, and be timed to connect with the main fast trains from London Waterloo. The proposed timetable also does represent an earlier finish of 20.45 (Monday-Friday) as opposed to 21.30 as at present.
- 2.6. On Saturdays the operation of the P&R has different demands. There is less demand from early morning commuters and very little evening demand and therefore the amended timetable reflects this, with a proposed earlier finish of 19.00 (as opposed to 21.30 as at present).
- 2.7. The current P&R contract operation price is £786,911 per annum and if the new service level were to be operated, then the revised price would be £748,793. Therefore the proposed amended timetable will reduce the P&R contract cost by £38,118 per annum, with minimum loss of service. However, it would also make the service attractive to a number of potential new customers.

### 3. Consultation on proposed changes

- 3.1. The main users of the P&R facility include the Hospital, University and County Council. They have been consulted over the changes and are happy with the proposals and understand the reasons for them. In the case of the Hospital users, the proposed changes have been tailored to meet the needs of their 'core hours' staff who work between 0730 and 2000.
- 3.2. In addition, users of the service have been consulted through posters displayed at the Park and Ride car park sites inviting comment on the proposed changes. This has generated a number of emails in support of the planned additional early morning bus services and better integration with rail services.

### 4. Additional P&R Services

- 4.1. In response to the anticipated additional demands on the P&R operation, extra services were organised on the four weekends before Christmas. On each of the four Saturdays leading up to Christmas, extra buses were contracted to supplement the timetabled service, funded through the additional usage of the P&R service. The Christmas Saturdays saw three times the normal Saturday patronage levels
- 4.2. 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 Business Improvement District, providing additional parking capacity over and above the free provision in the town centre.
- 4.3. Additional buses were also contracted on an *ad hoc* basis during the period of high demand before Christmas. This was at a period of unprecedented demand for parking which could not have been met in any other way. The cost of these extra buses was more than compensated for by the additional ticket sales.
- 4.4. These 'peak' demands have highlighted the car parking levels at which the current level of bus service (15 minute frequency) struggle to meet with demand, and hence indicate that - in the longer term - should demand for P&R car parking continue to grow, then the bus service may need to be developed to meet this demand.

### 5. Hampshire County Council P&R car park

- 5.1. The County Council have informed officers of their intention to purchase over 100 season tickets for the P&R service for the year 2012/13, and that due to the further contraction of their central Winchester parking facilities there may be a need for more during the year.
- 5.2. The County Council also 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 P&R buses.
- 5.3. The car park is operated under a temporary permission, which was first extended by one year in 2010 and again for a further two years from 2011. In both circumstances permission was granted by the County Council.

- 5.4. The current understanding between the City and County Councils is that the staff parking in the HCC car park can use the WCC-contracted P&R buses. This has been on the proviso that HCC procure additional 'peak hour' buses to provide additional capacity for the P&R facility. HCC intend to continue this operation for the year 2012/13 but there are currently no plans to seek approval for an extension of the use of this car park beyond March 2013.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

#### 6. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN (RELEVANCE TO):

- 6.1. The proposals accord with the Community Strategy outcome of safeguarding our high quality environment, and our economic prosperity outcome in terms of providing good, reliable transport options for those who work in the Winchester District. The timetable adjustments are also in line with our aspiration to be an efficient and effective Council.
- 6.2. There are considerable environmental benefits as a result of the ongoing operation of the P&R services, particularly in relation to the reduction in cars entering the town centre and their impact on the Air Quality Management Area and the Council's Climate Change Strategy.
- 6.3. It was hoped that the evening services would be better used and as such benefit the evening economy. Services in the early part of the evening are fairly well used and does indicate that people are staying in the Town a little longer. Beyond 8.30pm however the buses are only used by one or two people. It is not felt that stopping services 45 minutes earlier will impact on the economy or disadvantage large numbers of people and this is compensated for by the proposed earlier buses aimed at helping people catch early trains.

#### 7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1. Stagecoach have indicated that the operation of the Park and Ride service meeting the proposed timetable as set out in Appendix 1 will reduce the annual contract cost by approximately £38k (from £787k to £749k).
- 7.2. The additional saving of £8k above the £30k budget target approved in CAB2240 is proposed to remain within the bus contractor budget to cover any future additional ad-hoc service requirements, as have been necessary in this financial year to meet unprecedented peaks in demand (see 4.1 & 4.3 above).
- 7.3. The bus contract is subject to an annual uplift in line with CPI plus an annual maintenance uplift. This will increase the annual costs stated above, in 2012/13, and has been provided for within the general contractual commitments provision made in the Budget & Council Tax 2012/13 Cabinet paper (CAB2297).
- 7.4. 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 P&R service cannot be judged solely on what can be done at minimum direct cost to the Council.

There are less easy to quantify indirect environmental and economic benefits. In the case of the pre-Christmas shopping period for example, visitor demands was such that the P&R enabled the town to accommodate large numbers of visitors who did not need to drive wastefully into town searching for car parking spaces but still brought their spending power to Winchester..

- 7.5. 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.

## 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 P&R. 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 P&R 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 P&R service and the pricing differentials in place should continue to help encourage this behaviour

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

## APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Amended timetable for operation from May 2012

