

CABINET

21 MAY 2009

SOUTH OF WINCHESTER PARK & RIDE – CONTRACT & OPERATIONAL
DETAILS

REPORT OF HEAD OF ACCESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB1794 - Winchester Town Access Plan and South of Winchester Park & Ride - 4 February 2009
CAB1628 - Winchester Town Access Plan Consultation – 13 February 2008
CAB1367 - South Winchester Park and Ride – 13 December 2006
CAB 1138 – Park and Ride Bus Contract - 12 October 2005
CAB 1100 – Park and Ride Bus Contract - 29 June 2005
CAB 925 – Contract for Park and Ride Bus Service – 15 September 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report updates Cabinet on the provision of the second park and ride facility to the south of Winchester. It summarises the assessments made to determine the preferred route for the bus service operating from the site following consultation and technical consideration. It makes use of a number of different consultants' reports commissioned by Hampshire County Council whilst developing the business case for the new park and ride scheme.

The report seeks authority to obtain tenders for the bus service, the outcome of which will be the subject of a further report to Cabinet.

The report also identifies the possible benefits of a joint working arrangement between the City Council, County Council, SUSTRANs and others to promote the use of park and ride and other measures to reduce car use in central Winchester.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Head of Access and Infrastructure be authorised to obtain tenders for the main park and ride bus contract for a 5 year period from 1 April 2010, and that the tender include the following provisions:
 - Vehicles should be specified with diesel engines to a minimum of Euro 4 standard, a minimum capacity of 70 passengers and a maximum length of 12 metres.
 - The maximum age for the vehicles at the commencement of the contract will be 4 years and a maximum age at the end of the contract of 10 years.
 - To operate a 'linked' bus service connecting all of the town's park & ride sites as detailed in Appendix 1.
 - To include tender options to provide an extended period of operation with an evening bus service that would extend evening operations until 2130
 - To include tender options to allow for a contract period of 8 years
2. That the Head of Access and Infrastructure be given delegated authority to determine the evaluation criteria for the award of the contract and that a direction be made under Contract Procedure Rule 2.1 that the criteria include a price: quality ratio of 70% price: 30% quality.
3. That the outcome of the tendering process be reported to Cabinet in November 2009 for approval to award the contract.
4. That further reports be brought to Cabinet on;
 - (a) The financial implications of the scheme.
 - (b) The parking regulation order relating to the operation and control of the new and existing park and ride car parks.
 - (c) The terms of the lease for the new south of Winchester site.
 - (d) The Sustrans Travel Smart initiative.

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REPORT OF HEAD OF ACCESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

DETAIL

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The provision for a network of park and ride sites surrounding Winchester was first adopted in the Winchester Movement and Access Plan (WMAP) developed by both the City and County Councils in the early nineties. The first park and ride site at St Catherine's (including Barfield) was opened in 1993, and was subsequently expanded in 2004. It can now hold a maximum of 785 vehicles.
- 1.2 The provision of additional park and ride facilities needs to be made in the context of an up to date and agreed transport policy. Initially this context was the WMAP, which was incorporated into the first Local Transport Plan (LTP), adopted by the County Council in 2000. The second Local Transport Plan published in 2006 sought to replace the WMAP with the Town Access Plan. The provision of a South of Winchester Park and Ride site had already by that time been identified as part of the County Council's five year capital programme covering the years from 2006 to 2011.
- 1.3 The new park and ride site is now being considered as an integral part of the emerging Winchester Town Access Plan along with the associated reviews of the traffic management arrangements and car parking strategies.
- 1.4 The County Council undertook an extensive consultation exercise before settling on the preferred option for the south of Winchester site. Initially seven sites were investigated and assessed. Consultation then focussed on two of these sites – Bushfield Farm and Itchen Farm. Full details of the site appraisal, evaluation and consultation have been presented in previous Cabinet reports.
- 1.5 In July 2007 Hampshire County Council's Regulatory Committee approved the planning application for the Itchen Farm site, known locally as the Tarmac site, and in April 2008 the Leader of the County Council gave the final funding approval for the scheme to proceed. The initial site clearance and ecological work has been completed. Advanced archaeological work commenced in autumn 2008.
- 1.6 Dyer & Butler has been appointed as the contractor for the main car park works which started in April 2009. A separate contract for the landscape planting will be let this summer with the planting works starting winter

2009/10 as the main construction works are nearing completion. The total value of the works to which the County Council is now committed exceeds £7 million.

1.7 Improvements to Bushfield Roundabout and Hockley Link will be undertaken within the main contract. These works will enable two lanes of traffic to flow from Badger Farm Road, around Bushfield Roundabout to Hockley Link. The highway works will be the most disruptive element of the work, but are planned to be completed by mid-November 2009 to avoid the Christmas shopping traffic. The aim is to open the new site in April 2010.

1.8 CAB1367 approved on 13 December 2006 agreed:

“That the City Council’s support in principle be confirmed for the provision of a second park and ride service south of Winchester and that the Head of Access and Infrastructure be authorised to enter into further discussions with the County Council on the City Council taking the lease for the new site.

That the Head of Access and Infrastructure reports back to Cabinet on the heads of terms for the lease and an evaluation of the financial implications of running the second park and ride service.”

1.9 Upon completion of the new site, the total number of parking spaces available to park and ride users will increase to over 1600. Officers have been working together closely to ensure that the operation of the site best serves users and helps the scheme to meet its objectives of reducing traffic in the city centre.

2 ROUTE CHOICE – CONSIDERATIONS AND EVALUATIONS

2.1 There are a number of possible different bus routes from the park and ride into the town centre. Technical considerations reduced these to two which were put forward as part of a consultation process with employers along the Romsey Road whose staff and visitors are likely to be heavy users of the park and ride and whose support is therefore critical to its success. The first is an ‘in and out’ route along Romsey Road; the second is an ‘in’ route along St Cross Road and ‘out’ along Romsey Road. These route options could be run as a self contained loop service, or in combination with existing service to create a shuttle serving both car parks and destinations in between.

2.2 Five route options were initially assessed, of which a number were subsequently eliminated from further evaluation.

1. In/out along St Cross Road (later eliminated from evaluation because it does not serve Romsey Road users);

2. In/out along Romsey Road (including city centre loop - later eliminated from evaluation due duplication with current service);
 3. In along St Cross Rd and out along Romsey Road;
 4. Linked, inverted 'U' route in & out on Romsey road also delivering the existing service;
 5. In/out along Romsey Road – terminating at Rail station.
- 2.3 Option 4 was initially not favoured within the Consultants' initial report, despite concluding that it was likely to be the cheapest option. The reasons against this option are that it would need to be served by different bus stops in different directions and that any delays on the road network would affect both services.
- 2.4 However, there is a strong case for a service that can provide access to all of the key destinations (employment, retail, health, leisure and rail) from both sites and the Option 4 would best meet that requirement.
- 2.5 Further investigations and discussions have reinforced the benefits of route Option 4.
- It will require fewer buses to operate the service, saving a considerable sum from the annual Tender Contract Price (compared with two services run independently from both sites).
 - It can be most easily marketed, as both car parks (St Catherine's and the new site) can be used to get to all town destinations.
 - It can intercept travellers and visitors on the wider vehicle network, reducing the wider impacts of vehicle traffic.
- 2.6 In conclusion Option 4; the Linked, inverted 'U' service, in & out from the new car park site on Badger Farm Road / Romsey road also delivering the existing service to St Catherine's, is being put forward as the preferred route option and will be the basis for tendering of the bus services. Appendix 1 shows the precise bus route details.

3 ESTIMATED DEMAND FOR THE NEW SERVICE

- 3.1 The first demand assessments for the new park and ride service were set out within the Atkins Demand Forecasting Report (March 2006). These were carried out on the basis of parking fees, usage and differentials in 2005.
- 3.2 These initial 'demand' assessments were later expanded and used by consultants in 2007 as part of the supporting documentation for the new site's planning application. In both cases the demand assessments were based on generalised cost models to determine patronage and transfer. The demand assessments were initially carried out using 2005 parking fees and then rerun using the fees set for 2007/08.

- 3.3 Initial patronage estimates indicated that a route using St Cross Road would probably generate more passenger use than a Romsey Road route, and would consequently require less financial support. However, this evaluation was made without any consideration of possible bus priority measures on the routes selected, nor consideration of possible 'block bookings' from major employers on the Romsey road corridor, who show a preference for the Romsey Road route.
- 3.4 Discussions are now ongoing with a number of major employers in the Romsey Road area: these are considered to be key potential users of the new Park & Ride service and include the Hospital, the University, the Prison service, the Police Headquarters and the County Council.
- 3.5 Modelling of the parameters for generating income from the use of park and ride has demonstrated the importance of achieving high volumes of use. This is a more sensitive parameter than the price of each ticket. In order to generate predictable volumes of usage officers have discussed potential discounts with large employers in return for a commitment to block book and pre-pay for a significant number of season tickets: how they then allocate them to staff or visitors will be a matter for them. The aim is to provide them with an opportunity to treat the park and ride site as a flexible parking option for their staff and visitors. This suggestion has been welcomed by potential users. Whilst final agreement of the exact requirements has not been reached, it is possible that in combination the major employers could be expected to block book in excess of 500 of the 1600+ available tickets.
- 3.6 Working in conjunction with the existing park and ride service, Hampshire County Council currently operates an additional car parking area with 250 spaces adjacent to the St Catherine's Park & Ride site. This is operating under a temporary permission during the redevelopment of Ashburton Court and will cease upon completion of the new park and ride car park.
- 3.7 Hampshire County Council are very interested in using the South Winchester Park and Ride facility for staff parking and is currently reviewing their car parking arrangements in preparation for re-occupation of their Ashburton Court offices this summer. This includes the development of a Green Travel Plan which will be used to assess the County Council's requirement for staff parking spaces in the new South Winchester Park & Ride. At this time the County Council is prepared to commit to the block booking of 100 spaces, and there is a strong likelihood that, by the end of the year, they will be able to commit to a further booking to include the re-provision of the spaces which the County Council currently has in its temporary car park at Bar End.

4 TENDER TIMESCALES & REPLACEMENT OF CURRENT OPERATIONS

- 4.1 The current 5 year contract for the park and ride buses serving the existing site runs until 31 October 2010.
- 4.2 If the recommendations of this report are agreed, then the new park and ride bus contract will include buses serving the existing service and it will be necessary to serve notice of termination on the current contract. This will need to be done in January 2010, allowing a minimum of two months notice. Such a period of notice does allow the termination of the existing contract without WCC facing the risk of any financial claim.
- 4.3 The aim is for the new site to become operational in April 2010. In order to meet this deadline, and allow any operator to procure buses, the new tender will need to be awarded by the end of November 2009.
- 4.4 Changes to bus tendering legislation now allows contracts of up to eight years. It is therefore proposed to allow tenders to price this as an option as it may allow for a reduced annual cost.
- 4.5 A full timetable for the Report and Tender programme is found at Appendix 2.

5 BUS SPECIFICATIONS

- 5.1 As part of the last tender process an environmental evaluation had looked at the possible benefits of using diesel-electric hybrid buses. It was hoped that these would be in commercial production and that they would produce lower emissions than traditional diesel engined vehicles. However, the technologies behind diesel-electric hybrid buses are still very much in their infancy, and whilst some are now in operation in London they do so under significant financial subsidy.
- 5.2 Diesel buses to Euro IV Emission standard became available in spring 2006 although the Euro IV standard did not become mandatory until November 2006. The existing park and ride buses are all Euro IV standard.
- 5.3 The provision of 'double decked' buses operating the park and ride service would increase passenger capacity. However, due to the characteristics of the existing Winchester service with its relatively short journey and large number of stops, double deck buses are not considered suitable due to the increased loading and unloading times.
- 5.4 From October 2009 all new buses will have to be engineered to Euro V emission standard. Discussions with the bus operators indicate a significant cost increase with the specification of Euro V vehicles over Euro IV vehicles, yet there are only marginal improvements in vehicle emissions. At the likely start of the new contract in April 2010 the existing buses will only be four years old, and as they remain in good

operational condition with appealing liveries and interior layout it would be sensible to allow for a tender specification that would allow for continued use of these vehicles or newer vehicles, all in the current livery.

6 TIMETABLE & FREQUENCY

- 6.1 Between Monday and Friday the current park and ride buses operate at a 5 min frequency during the peak hours and a 15 min frequency during off peak hours. The very high peak frequency is set because of the high number of commuter trips being made. In view of likely high level 'commuter' transfer to any new site, the current peak frequency could be reduced, and the peak (commuter) loading would be split across the two sites.
- 6.2 Emphasis on the existing park and ride has been on encouraging long stay and commuters to relocate from the town car parks to the park and ride. Within the expanded park and ride, there is the opportunity to create an attractive service that serves a number of different demands, including shopping, hospital and university visits. This can be achieved by both a good level of service throughout the day, and also by the use of reduced price tickets for off-peak use.
- 6.3 However, a reasonable level of frequency needs to be provided in order to offer an attractive service to users. In common with others around the country, it is envisaged that we will seek tenders to operate a timetable that offers a peak hour bus frequency of 10 minutes and an off-peak frequency of 15 minutes.
- 6.4 The frequency of the service also dictates peak passenger capacity, and any service needs to be able to accommodate anticipated times of peak demand.
- 6.5 A ten minute frequency from one site allows a maximum theoretical passenger capacity of 420 people per hour from each site and a combined maximum capacity of 840 passengers per hour from both sites (1600 spaces). This compares favourably with a maximum measured demand from the existing & HCC sites (1000+ spaces) of 390 passengers per hour.
- 6.6 Work has been carried out to evaluate the current bus operating conditions and this is being used to develop and agree with the County Council a bus operating timetable, which will be used as a basis for the tendering process. Detail of the bus route and planned frequencies are set out in Appendix 1.
- 6.7 The current bus frequency on a Saturday is set at 10 minutes, with a few peak hour buses running at 15 minute frequency. It is suggested that tenders are sought on the basis of a 15 minute frequency from both sites operating all day Saturdays.

- 6.8 The tender contract will be based on the existing start / finish times used in the operation of the current park and ride facility, which are 0700 to 1930. The tender will also seek prices for extended evening operations as an option which can be considered by Cabinet, it is suggested that this would extend evening operation until 2130.
- 6.9 The current WCC bus service contract provides buses every 7 to 8 minutes although at present buses run every 5 minutes in the peak to cater for the extra HCC staff who are parking in the temporary HCC car park at Bar End. The proposed peak hour bus frequency of 10 minutes for the combined park and ride sites reflects the anticipated switch of some users from the existing site to the new one, thus spreading the load, and the desire to run a cost effective service. It is also proposed to seek tender prices for a peak time bus service of every 7 to 8 minutes, to show additional costs if that is felt desirable. This is likely to have considerable additional costs, as it would probably require two additional buses during the peak hours

7 TICKETING & CHARGING

- 7.1 The current system of charging is based on a daily fee for the vehicle. The machine issues two tickets, one of which is to cover the parking of the vehicle, the other covers the use of the bus service from and back to the car park by those in the vehicle. It is not proposed to change this system of ticketing which is far better at promoting shared car use than the alternative of charging for use of the buses as well as or instead of charging for parking.
- 7.2 The current daily fee is set at £2.70. This has remained unchanged since 2007. It is likely that that when the new park and ride opens in 2010, the daily fee at all sites will be slightly increased and that all proposed discounts will be set against this revised daily fee.
- 7.3 Season tickets are currently not used on the park and ride service. Instead 'smart cards' are used which pre-purchase a number of daily uses at a discounted rate. These are then used in the machines park to obtain the two tickets.
- 7.4 In order to simplify the operations for some users and to reflect the operations of other car parks it is now proposed make season tickets available to park and ride users.
- 7.5 Season tickets will be issued in two parts, one for the vehicle and one for the passenger(s) to use on the buses. The season tickets will be priced to reflect the agreed level of discounts set against the Daily Fee. This is already agreed City Council policy and is in operation in other long stay car parks. The use of season tickets will also enable simpler discounted bulk ticket purchases to be made by large employers.
- 7.6 It is also planned make a six month season ticket available as this would spread the cost for those on low incomes.

- 7.7 The use of smart cards will be retained, as for many people these offer the convenience of pre-purchase and some level of discount without the necessity for an annual Season Ticket purchase. It is planned to set the level of discount for Smart Card Purchase at 10% less than the daily fee. Smart cards can offer a valuable discount for part-time workers who would not benefit from an annual season ticket.
- 7.8 Consideration is also being given to offering higher discounts to bulk purchasers willing to make pre-payment. As many of the potential new users of the park and ride have free, but limited parking, it is important that significant initial discounts are offered to encourage their use. A high level of discount would be part of a deliberate policy to work in cooperation with Romsey Road employers to promote use of the site and should be seen in this context. Discount rates would have to be available on the same basis to users, not individually negotiated, and included in the Parking Order.
- 7.9 The highest levels of discounts will only be available to employers booking a minimum of number of annual season tickets. It is considered to be an effective way of selling tickets for spaces that could otherwise be unused. It is also not necessarily a permanently fixed level of discount. Once usage levels have been established and travel patterns fixed it would be possible to review the charging levels and discounts.
- 7.10 The block booking discount may enable the City Council to sell and use additional park and ride spaces, which could otherwise remain empty.
- 7.11 Traditionally the Winchester park and ride has focused on commuter parking. However, the completion of the new site will provide an additional 800 spaces and at the outset there is likely to be a surplus of parking spaces, and more importantly, spare capacity outside the peak hours. Therefore it is planned to introduce an 'off-peak' charge for people using the service after 10.30 am as this would offer a good incentive to shoppers and visitors to use the service and possibly stay longer in the town.
- 7.12 The above issues will be considered further over the coming months and further discussions will take place with Romsey Road employers. A further report will then be brought to Cabinet setting out detailed proposals for charges/ discounts at the park and ride sites and in the Town Centre car parks in order to encourage the best possible use of the park and ride services.

8 BUS PRIORITY AND MARKETING

- 8.1 The County Council is investigating a number of different options for bus priority measures to support the 'ride' element of the service, and whilst these are not required for the construction of the 'park' element of the scheme, such facilities assist in making the park and ride service an attractive alternative to town centre parking.

- 8.2 A number of locations on the proposed bus route (Romsey Road and Badger Farm Road) rate highly on the Counties list of 'congested roads'.
- 8.3 The section of Badger Farm Road approaching the Bushfield Roundabout will be addressed by improvements to the roundabout which will be undertaken as part of the park & ride car park construction, this will allow both lanes of traffic from Badger Farm Road to access the M3 southbound, and this should reduce the delays on Badger Farm Road.
- 8.4 The congestion problems on Romsey Road are being reviewed by the County Council with a view to developing an agreed strategy for the road.
- 8.5 This congestion reflects the high demands placed on these roads in providing access to some of the major employment destinations in Winchester. The provision of a park and ride facility along a congested route may appear to be a perverse consideration, but allowance should be made for the fact that this route is where potential demand is highest, as is the opportunity to encourage new park and ride users which could have the positive impact of improving congestion conditions and delays for all users. Modelling undertaken by the County Council suggests that park and ride in operation on this corridor could reduce peak time traffic flows by between 10 and 20%.
- 8.6 Discussions have also taken place with the County Council and Sustrans regarding the potential to undertake marketing and promotion of the park and ride service over the next 3 years. Sustrans promote the TravelSmart initiative which would aim to work with key partners to promote the services and ensure that the best possible use is made of them, that good information is provided and that work is undertaken to try to persuade individuals and organisations to change travel habits in favour of more sustainable transport modes. TravelSmart can be part funded by Sustrans and with contributions for 3 or 4 other key partners the financial burden would not be that great and with such a large investment in infrastructure it is considered to be very worthwhile. Officers will develop the thinking on this concept and bring proposals back to Cabinet in due course.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- 9 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY & CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN (RELEVANCE TO):
 - 9.1 These schemes and proposals contribute to the Corporate Priorities for safeguarding our high quality environment and safe & secure communities.

10 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 10.1 The precise cost of operating the new service cannot be known at this stage as it will be dependent upon a number of factors including ticket prices, levels of utilisation, and the bus contract tender price. At similar pricing and usage levels the revenue from the new site will not be fully able to cover the additional costs of new bus service given the longer bus route involved and this has been noted in previous reports.
- 10.2 The current contract to run the buses serving the existing park and ride has an annual cost to the Council of approximately £377,000 against a net income from ticket receipts of £350,000 and therefore the Council's obligation is to cover the costs of the operation and maintenance of the car park from other income sources.
- 10.3 The tendering of a bus service route as set out in section 2 of this report will minimise the cost of the tendered service, this expenditure will be offset against the ticket sales which the proposals set out within this report seek to maximise.
- 10.4 The new park and ride service connecting both sites and 1600 spaces will initially need to operate with a subsidy. This will need to be considered as part of the budget process for 2010/11 which is the first year in which new the site will be operating. The exact amount will be determined through the tendering process and will be reported back to Cabinet in November. In order to meet the April 2010 start date it is likely that decisions will have to be made before the overall Council budget for 2010/11 is finalised.
- 10.5 The City Council's Access and Infrastructure Division will be responsible for the letting and management of any future park and ride contracts.
- 10.6 Should the park and ride be successful in removing traffic and parking movements from the town, as is the intention, there will be an associated important environmental improvement, for which no economic value has been determined. In addition any spaces within town created by a relocation of vehicles will allow alternative uses for that space which again could yield an economic return which has not been determined.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Bus Route Details & Frequencies

Appendix 2: Report and Tender programme

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

1. South Winchester Park & Ride - Environmental Statement, Chapter 2: Purpose of Scheme - March 2007 - (Motts / HCC – part of planning application)
2. South Winchester Park & Ride - Transportation Assessment - October 2006 (Motts / HCC – part of planning application)
3. Winchester Park & Ride – Bus Service Technical Note 2 March 2006 (Atkins)
4. Winchester (South) Park & Ride – Demand Forecasting Report - March 2006 (Atkins)
5. Hampshire County Council - Local Transport Plan 2006-2011

Appendix 1: Bus Route Details & Frequencies

Route Details -

Westbound: St Catherine's to new south of Winchester site

St Catherine's Car Park
 Barfield Car Park
 Barfield Road
 The Broadway
 St Georges street
 Jewry Street
 City Road
 Rail Station
 Sussex Street
 Romsey Road - RHCH & University
 Badger Farm Road
 New Car Park

Eastbound: south of Winchester site to St Catherine's

New Car Park
 Badger Farm Road
 Romsey Road - RHCH & University
 Upper High Street
 Rail Station
 City Road
 North Walls
 Union Street
 The Broadway
 Barfield Road
 Barfield Car Park
 St Catherine's Car Park

Tender & Frequency Details

- Between 0700 and 1930 - Monday and Friday the route will be operated on the basis of a 10 minute peak time frequency (0700 to 0900 and 1600 to 1800) and a 15 minute frequency at all other times
- On Saturdays the service will operate on a 15 minute frequency between 0730 and 1900
- Tender options will also be sought for the operation of a 7 to 8 minute peak hour frequency.
- A tender for a five year operation from April 2010 will be sought, along with the option for operators to tender for an eight year period of operation.
- Tender options will also be sought to provide an extended time of operation with an evening bus service that would allow operations until 2130

Appendix 2: Report and Tender Programme

- May 2009 - Cabinet approval to seek Tenders, along with Contract and Operational details
- June / July 2009 – HCC & WCC develop tender documents
- August / September 2009 - Seek tenders
- October 2009 – Tenders returned
- October / November 2009 – Cabinet Approval of Tender and referral to Principal Scrutiny Committee (if necessary)
 - Award new contract
- Jan 2010 – Final Cabinet Approval
 - Final agreement on costs
 - Serve notice on current contract
- April 2010 – planned opening