

CABINET (TRAFFIC AND PARKING) COMMITTEE

5 NOVEMBER 2009

PARK & RIDE BUS CONTRACT – RESULTS OF TENDERING FOR NEW
CONTRACT, PARKING PRICES & LEASING OF THE SITE

REPORT OF HEAD OF ACCESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB1843 – South of Winchester Park & Ride – Contract & Operational Details – 21 May 2009

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 the Committee on the tendering of the bus service which will serve both the existing and new park and ride facilities in Winchester.

It summarises the assessments made of the different tender options and seeks agreement to approve the awarding of the Park and Ride bus contract.

The report also updates the position in relation to the leasing of the car parks from the County Council and seeks approval to enter into a lease with Hampshire County Council for the new park and ride site and to advertise a Parking Places Order in line with the ticketing and proposed pricing as set out in this report and the Car Park

Charges Review Report elsewhere on this agenda.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Head of Access and Infrastructure be authorised to appoint the company identified in exempt appendix 2 to operate the park and ride bus contract for a 5 year period from 18 April 2010, and that the tender option chosen be for a six bus contract, using Euro V vehicles, operating from 07:00 to 21:30 and that the initial annual price of the contract be as set out in paragraph 2.1 of the exempt appendix.
2. That the Head of Legal Services be authorised to advertise an order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended) relating to the operation and control of the new and existing park and ride car parks as set out in the report, and the Head of Access and Infrastructure (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access) to make such order (taking into account any representations received).
3. That the Head of Access and Infrastructure (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access) be authorised to set such additional discounted arrangements for block bookings as he may determine necessary.
4. That the City Council enters into a legal agreement to lease the new and existing Park and Ride car parks from the County Council on the basis outlined in paragraph 5.6 of the Report, , subject to details to be approved by the Head of Estates in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access and the Head of Finance.

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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. The partnership arrangement between the two councils works on the principle that the County Council provides the infrastructure whilst the City pays for the operational costs.
- 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. 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.
- 1.3 In July 2007 Hampshire County Council 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 works are now progressing to programme and the aim is to operate the new site from April 2010.
- 1.4 On completion of the new site the total number of parking spaces available to park and ride users around Winchester will increase to over 1600. Given the scale of investment it is essential that best advantage is taken of the opportunity to reduce traffic congestion in the town centre and provide excellent, affordable parking space for people working in the local economy.
- 1.5 Following the agreement of Cabinet to the recommendations made in CAB1794, Hampshire County Council on behalf of the City Council sought tenders for the operation of a new bus service to provide the 'ride' element from all of the Park and Ride sites
- 1.6 The County Council sent out tender details to 58 different operators, who were asked to submit prices for 16 different main tender options to reflect Cabinet's recommendations, comprising:

- Four timetable options, reflecting two different levels of peak time frequency (One option for a 10 minute peak time frequency, the other for a 7 to 8 minute peak frequency) and two different levels of evening operation. (One option to finish running the service at 19:30, the other to finish running the service at 21:30)
- Two different contract lengths (5 years and 8 years)
- Two different vehicle age specifications (one allowing for reuse of the existing Euro IV buses, the other specifying new Euro V buses which have even lower emissions levels).

All tender specifications expected the buses to operate at a 15 minute frequency Off-Peak, in the evenings and on Saturdays. The Peak Hours were considered to be 07:00 to 09:30 and 16:00 to 18:00.

1.8 CAB 1794 considered the options for the bus routes from the new and existing car parks. The bus route selected for the Park and Ride service is the one commonly referred to as the inverted 'U' service. This is a linked route from the new car park site to the existing car park and vice versa. The main benefits of this route are:

- It will require fewest 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 south of Winchester site) can be used to get to the important town destinations, including the retail and heritage area, the hospital, the university and the rail station.
- It can intercept travellers and visitors on the wider vehicle network, reducing the wider impacts of vehicle traffic.

2 TENDER BID EVALUATION

2.1 Details of the tenders submitted and the evaluation of these is set out in Exempt Appendices 2, 3 and 4.

3 SERVICE TIMING & DEMAND CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 CAB 1794 considered the demand for the Park & Ride service. In summary, this concluded that there was significant potential for new users of the service from a number of major employers in the Romsey Road area including the hospital, the university, the prison service, the police headquarters and Hampshire County Council.

3.2 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. The impacts of such charging is discussed in Section 6 and in the report on parking charges considered elsewhere on this agenda.

- 3.3 Upon the opening of the new Park & Ride service, County Council users will no longer be permitted use of the additional car parking area (250 spaces adjacent to the St Catherine's Park & Ride site) or to ride free on the Park & Ride buses. This car park 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. The County Council currently pay for additional bus capacity as part of this arrangement.
- 3.4 The current hours of operation for the Park & Ride are from 07:00 to 19:30. Under the different tender options there was the opportunity for the bidders to tender for a service which finished at 21:30 and in doing so allow the opportunity for additional patronage in relation to the rail and hospital users, and also to all for the potential expansion of the early evening economy.
- 3.5 To ensure that the service is as attractive as possible to as many users as possible, it is recommended that Cabinet selects a tender option that includes the finish time of 21:30.
- 3.6 A reasonable level of frequency needs to be provided in order to offer an attractive service to users. In common with the existing scheme, and others around the country, all tender bids were submitted on the basis of an off-peak bus frequency of 15 minutes, with different options for peak time operation, the most basic of which was a ten minute frequency. The tender prices for a higher peak hour frequency cost at least £100,000 per more each year. It is therefore recommended that the Committee selects a tender option that includes the peak time frequency of ten minutes operated by six buses.

4 AIR QUALITY & BUS SPECIFICATIONS – EURO IV OR EURO V

- 4.1 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 engine 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.
- 4.2 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 four existing park and ride buses are all Euro IV standard.
- 4.3 From October 2009 all new buses will have to be engineered to Euro V emission standard. The Euro V specification vehicles offer limited

improvements over Euro IV vehicles, as the emission limits for all pollutants remains the same with the exception of Oxides of Nitrogen (for which the limit decreases from 3.5 g/KwH to 2.0 g/KwH). However, as the Air Quality Management Area for Winchester is declared on the basis of poor air quality in relation to the permitted levels of Oxides of Nitrogen and the Park & Ride bus fleet are responsible for 120 daily trips through the town centre, they are directly responsible for a small but significant proportion of the emissions in the town centre.

- 4.4 The cost of specifying new Euro V buses rather than allow the continued use of the existing Euro IV buses is approximately £40,000 per annum. In addition the use of new vehicles continues to show the Council's commitment to providing a high quality service to the users of the Park & Ride facility.

5 LEASING OF THE NEW CAR PARK

- 5.1 The current 10 year lease on the existing car park expires on 16 March 2014. In order to ensure that all of the Park and Ride leases come up for renewal at the same time, it has currently been suggested that the term of the new South Winchester Park and Ride lease will come to an end on the same date so that, if it is considered appropriate, all Park and Ride leases can be renewed at the same time for a further ten years from 2014.
- 5.2 Although there will be no automatic right to renewal of the lease at the end of the term (as the County Council does not wish, for estate management purposes, to be legally bound to renew the lease), both parties envisage that the leases will be renewed every ten years.
- 5.3 The proposed lease includes an option for either side to terminate the agreement on 17 March 2012 with suitable notice if circumstances change.
- 5.4 The proposed lease specifies the financial responsibility of each party. The County Council is responsible for the costs of all work to construct the new car park and the adjoining amenities building, except for the provision of the pay and display machines which is the responsibility of the City Council. The City Council will then become responsible for all costs relating to maintenance of the operational area including the ticket machines, enforcement, surface and landscaping maintenance, cleaning of public toilets, and business rates. The City Council will also be responsible for providing the Park and Ride bus service, and all these costs will be offset by the income received by the City Council from the pay and display machines. The County Council will retain responsibility for managing the areas of woodland and open space that surround the operational area of the new car park.
- 5.5 The proposed lease of the new site is otherwise comparable to the existing lease and does not require any rental payment by the City Council to the County Council.

- 5.6 Given the 2014 expiry date is relatively close, it is proposed that further discussions take place with the County Council to seek to secure a longer lease of the sites, but otherwise substantially on the same split of responsibility as outlined above.

6 TICKETING & CHARGING

- 6.1 The impacts of ticket prices and charging in relation to the entire parking service, including the new and existing Park & Ride facilities, are also discussed in the Report on Parking Charges also being considered elsewhere on this agenda (CAB1915(TP) refers).
- 6.2 The current system of charging for Park & Ride 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 because the cost is per vehicle not per passenger.
- 6.3 Over the last six years there have been a number of changes to the fees charged for the use of the Park & Ride as shown in the table below.

Park & Ride fees - 2004 to 2009		
	Daily Fee	'Smart Card' daily fee
2004	£1.50	£1.20
2005	£1.50	£1.20
2006	£2.00	£1.70
2007	£2.70	£2.50
2008	£2.70	£2.50
2009	£2.70	£2.50

- 6.4 The current daily fee is set at £2.70. This has remained unchanged since 2007. It therefore appropriate to review this figure in conjunction with the opening new park and ride car park in 2010.
- 6.5 It is proposed to increase in the daily fee from £2.70 to £3.00 at all sites, and then offer a range of discounts which will be set against this revised daily fee. The £3.00 daily fee for the park and ride is set to cost half as much as all day parking in the town centre.
- 6.6 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.

- 6.7 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.
- 6.8 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.
- 6.9 It is also planned to make a six month season ticket available to make the initial cost more manageable for those on lower incomes.
- 6.10 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 workers who do not park every day and who would not benefit from an annual season ticket.
- 6.11 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.
- 6.12 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. The level set for further discounts for block-booked tickets will be delegated to the Portfolio for Planning and Access to approve.
- 6.13 The block booking discount may enable the City Council to sell and use additional park and ride spaces, which could otherwise remain empty.
- 6.14 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. It is proposed to set the fee for this service at £2.00 as this is a similar level or less than parking in town for two hours.

- 6.15 A complete table of the proposed Tariff of Fees & Discounts is found at Appendix 1. This is discussed and approval is being sought for these as part of the Car Park Charges Review Report being considered elsewhere on this agenda. It is recommended that a parking regulation order relating to the operation and control of the new and existing park and ride car parks be advertised to reflect this tariff.

7 BUS PRIORITY AND MARKETING

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 A number of locations on the proposed bus route (Romsey Road and Badger Farm Road) rate highly on the Counties list of 'congested roads'.
- 7.3 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.
- 7.4 The congestion problems on Romsey Road are being reviewed by the County Council with a view to developing an agreed strategy for the road.
- 7.5 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%.
- 7.6 Hampshire County Council is working on a number of proposed changes on Romsey Road. These proposals are yet to receive formal approval and will likely to be the subject of a project appraisal at the end of October or early November. This would still enable them to implement the proposals early in 2010 and be complete before SWPR opens.
- 7.7 The proposals outlined below are in response to two particular issues on Romsey Road - journey time delay, and journey time reliability.

- 7.8 Traffic builds up on Romsey Road east (city) bound on the approach to Battery Hill junction in the am peak and west bound in the pm peak. In the pm peak, the queue reaches back to Chilbolton Avenue roundabout junction and further delays are experienced here for Romsey Road west bound traffic due to Chilbolton Avenue right-turning traffic taking priority over Romsey Road traffic and restricting access onto the roundabout.
- 7.9 A trial was undertaken in July of a pre-signal on Chilbolton Avenue prior to the roundabout. This had the effect of creating breaks in the flow of traffic to provide improved throughput at the roundabout for Romsey Road traffic. At the same time alterations were made to the traffic signals at the Battery Hill junction to provide greater green time for Romsey Road traffic.
- 7.10 The results from the trial indicated that these measures had reduced journey times along Romsey Road and had improved journey time reliability. The proposed measures are therefore:
- Reconfigure Battery Hill/Romsey Road traffic signals to ensure maximum green time is given to Romsey Road in every 160 second cycle. The current fixed time pedestrian crossings at the junction will be replaced with Puffin crossings. This will maximise the efficiency of the junction as the signals use a detection system to 'tailor' crossing times accordingly. These measures should allow greater throughput for Romsey Road traffic at this junction in both peak periods
 - To reduce the dominance of right turning Chilbolton Avenue traffic over west bound Romsey Road traffic at Chilbolton Avenue Roundabout, a pre-signal will be installed on Chilbolton Avenue prior to the roundabout. The pre-signal layout will consist of two signal heads and carriageway narrowing. Anti-skid surfacing will also be installed. The signals will only operate during the pm peak when traffic begins to queue through the roundabout on Romsey Road. The signals will operated intelligently utilising a detector system in the carriageway, and CCTV will also be used to monitor operation. The pre-signal will be installed as a two-year trial in order to assess its impact.
- 7.11 As well the above measures, the proposals also include improvements to the bus waiting facilities adjacent to the Royal South Hampshire Hospital. These stops will serve the Romsey Road major employers and as such are likely to experience a rise in demand for park and ride, particularly on the west bound stop where passengers will wait to board services back to the park and ride site. The proposals include modifying the current lay-by on the west bound side to allow buses to pull in parallel to the raised kerbs and replace the three bay bus shelter with a six bay shelter to accommodate increased demand. The shelter on the east bound side will be replaced but remain as a three bay shelter as this stop is predominantly used for alighting.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

8 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 8.1 These schemes and proposals contribute to the Corporate Priorities for safeguarding our high quality environment and safe and secure communities.

9 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Park & Ride facility must be considered as an integral part of the access strategy for Winchester supporting the Vision for Winchester of economic prosperity and a high quality environment. Charges for the use of park and ride must therefore be set in context with other car parking charges which are covered in the report on parking charges elsewhere on this agenda (CAB1915(TP) refers).
- 9.2 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 annual income from ticket receipts of approximately £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.
- 9.3 Detailed budgetary implications of the various tender options are set out in the Resource Implications section of Exempt Appendix 2.
- 9.4 A number of studies carried out by the County and City Councils has allowed an estimate the possible financial implications to be made and these are set out in the Exempt Appendix to the report on parking charges also being considered elsewhere on this agenda.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 10.1 One area of risk is that people will change travel habits and that the projected usage of the Park & Ride service will not materialise. This risk is being minimised by working with potential users to ensure that the operation is tailored to meet their needs and aspirations as far as possible.
- 10.2 Another area of risk is in the journey time reliability of the bus service is not sufficient to operate a ten minute frequency using six buses. This risk is being minimised by working with the County Council on bus priority measures to ensure the bus journeys are as reliable as possible. Should operational difficulties still remain then another approach could be to procure an additional bus to assist with the peak hour operations. This would cost approximately £60,000 per annum.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Tariff of Fees & Discounts

EXEMPT Appendix 2: Tender Bid Evaluation & Assessment

EXEMPT Appendix 3: Tender Bid Evaluation Table

EXEMPT Appendix 4: Supplementary Tender Bid Evaluation Table

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Bus Service Specification and Tendering Documents sent out by Hampshire County Council. Including the Form of Tender, the Service Specification, the Quality Questionnaire, Guidance Notes and Tender Assessment information.

Appendix 1: Tariff of Fees & Discounts

Ticket Type	Daily* Cost of Ticket (*assumes 230 daily uses per annum)	
	2009	2010
Daily	£2.70	£3.00
Daily - with 'smart card' discount	£2.50	£2.70
Annual Season Ticket – for general use with 20% discount per annum.	Not Available	£2.40*
Season Ticket - with 'Block-booked' discount for employers booking & paying for at least 100 tickets per annum.	Not Available	Discount level to be agreed by the Head of Access and Infrastructure in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access
Season Ticket - with 'Block-booked' discount for employers booking & paying for between 50 and 100 tickets per annum.	Not Available	Discount level to be agreed by the Head of Access and Infrastructure in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Access
Daily – Off-Peak ticket available for purchase after 10.30AM (not Saturdays)	Not Available	£2.00
Daily – Three hour ticket for Saturday use only**	£1.50**	£1.50**
Parking after 4pm**	Free**	Free**

**To be available in St Catherines and Barfield Car Parks only, to enable use in conjunction with the Athletics Stadium, CAB 1462 & 1597 refers.