

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member - Environment
Date:	9 March 2010
Title:	Retendering of local bus services – New Forest
Reference:	1098
Report From:	Director of Environment

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to detail the outcome of tenders for renewal of four year bus subsidy contracts in the New Forest tendering area (inter-urban, rural and local town routes serving the Lymington, Lyndhurst, Brockenhurst, New Milton, Ringwood and Fordingbridge areas, but extending to Southampton, Totton, Hythe, Salisbury, Christchurch and Bournemouth).
- 1.2. It proposes a plan of action to ensure value for money and seeks to enable transport services which give access to employment, education, health, retail and leisure facilities for the widest section of the community, so enhancing well-being.
- 1.3. The proposal responds to rising costs and changing patterns of commercial service provision by amending some timetables and introducing one taxi-share to maintain services for as many areas as possible within affordable budget levels.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. Tenders were invited for the existing pattern of services and for alternative service options aimed at ensuring continued service provision within value for money criteria. Some of the tenders invited price options to incorporate housekeeping measures where particular journeys were found to be poorly used.
- 2.2. Some tenders included the carriage of pupils attending Priestlands School, Lymington and Ringwood School whose travel is currently covered by separate school transport contracts which will now be terminated or

revised. This has increased the value of the tenders sought compared to the last retendering of this group of services, but the cost of home to school travel is clearly identified within each tender bid and will continue to be funded from the home to school transport budget with no impact on the bus subsidy budget. The move is intended to ensure that value for money is achieved.

- 2.3. Shortly before tenders were issued, Wilts & Dorset surrendered the remaining commercial journeys on services 112 (Lymington–Beaulieu-Hythe) and 175/176 (Ringwood–Bransgore-Bournemouth). They also declared a revised pattern of commercial journeys on services 56/56A (Lymington–Brockenhurst–Lyndhurst-Southampton). This allowed more coordinated timetable options to be prepared for these tenders than was previously possible though increased the number of journeys for which subsidy was sought.
- 2.4. In September 2009 Travelguest, trading as Dorset Sprinter, began new commercial services X5/X55 between Bournemouth, Ringwood and Southampton, via the A31 and M27. From 19 April 2010 only the X5 service between Ringwood and Southampton will run. The X5 duplicates in part links provided by supported service 35 between Ringwood and Southampton.
- 2.5. Three operators submitted tenders and all tenders were the subject of at least one bid.

3. Finance

- 3.1. The current tender cost is £777,162, excluding home to school transport costs. Of this £100,135 is contributed by the neighbouring authorities of Dorset, Bournemouth and Southampton.
- 3.2. To retain the existing service pattern unchanged would cost £952,220 per annum (an increase of 23%). This would result in a number of services failing to meet value for money criteria.
- 3.3. The measures proposed in Section 5 will reduce the cost to £803,646 per annum (an increase of 3%). Of this £81,014 will be contributed by the neighbouring authorities, giving a cost of £722,632 attributable to the public transport budget (an increase of 6%). As the total contributions will reduce, action is outlined in items 5.10 and 5.11 that would see timetables amended accordingly.
- 3.4. A further £187,600 is attributable to the home to school transport budget, giving a total tender cost of £991,246.
- 3.5. To address a specific section of route which would be left without a service, authority is sought for the Director of Environment to explore the provision of a community transport alternative or a taxi-share service between Lyndhurst, Burley and Ringwood.

4. Performance

- 4.1. The proposed tenders include a combined bid which offers a significant saving on the individual tender prices. The proposed tenders meet value for money criteria and provide services to the widest area within affordable budget levels.
- 4.2. Changes to the timetables for some services and the evaluation and implementation of a taxi-share alternative have helped ensure effective service provision which responds to current travel patterns.

5. Other key issues

- 5.1. The impact of the tendering exercise will be greatest on two predominantly rural services and on the New Milton town service network.
- 5.2. Service 35 currently provides off-peak journeys between Ringwood, Burley and Southampton and peak and off-peak links between Lyndhurst, Burley and Ringwood. Peak hour journeys between Ringwood and Southampton are available on National Express coaches and now additionally on commercial service X5.
- 5.3. The lowest tender price for the existing timetable on service 35 is £81,900, which exceeds criteria at £6.88 per passenger trip and represents a rise of 102%. As commercial service X5 now provides links between Ringwood, Poulner and Southampton across the day, the tender for service 35 will not be awarded. The proposed taxi-share would provide alternative links between Lyndhurst, Burley and Ringwood.
- 5.4. Service 112 provides peak and off-peak journeys in both directions between Lymington, Beaulieu and Hythe. After making allowance for the home to school transport element, the cost of the tender to replace the existing timetable is £83,800, which represents an increase of 63%. A revised timetable is therefore proposed with an alternative home to school transport element which makes the service suitable for midi-bus operation throughout the day and so reduces costs.
- 5.5. Departures from Lymington and Hythe will now be at more regular times and most existing links will be retained. However, late afternoon journeys are poorly used and currently require two buses; therefore times have been altered and the equivalent of one round trip withdrawn in order to accommodate the majority of travel needs with the use of one bus.
- 5.6. One Saturday journey in each direction currently runs via Hardley for residents in that area travelling to and from Lymington Market. These are among the commercial journeys being surrendered by Wilts & Dorset and this diversion is used by an average of four passengers per day. However, it is not possible to accommodate this diversion without compromising the more regular timings of the new, entirely supported, timetable. Passengers may instead travel between Hardley and Hythe by alternative services, to

connect with service 112 to Lymington. Overall, these changes would reduce the cost of the tender to £57,200, more in line with existing funding levels for this service.

- 5.7. The New Milton town midi-bus network comprises:

Service 191 New Milton – Chatsworth Park

Service 192 New Milton – Hordle

Services 194/195 New Milton – Barton-on-Sea.

- 5.8. Together these services require two buses on Monday to Friday and one bus on Saturday, when a much reduced timetable is operated. The combined price for retaining all existing timetables is £82,100, an increase of 15%. The majority of journeys undertaken on these services are not thought to be time-critical, while service X12 provides alternative main-road links from New Milton to Hordle and Barton-on-Sea.
- 5.9. By adopting the model of an earlier finish time - as previously applied on comparable town services in Lymington and Ringwood, following earlier price increases - a price of £71,500 is achieved, in line with existing funding levels. Journeys carrying pupils to and from The Arnewood School would be retained.
- 5.10. Negotiations with neighbouring authorities have resulted in a lower level of contribution to cross boundary services than at present. On service X12 between Lymington, New Milton, Christchurch and Bournemouth the contribution remains unchanged. To keep this service within budgets, Dorset County Council and Bournemouth Borough Council have proposed reductions in the evening timetable on Mondays to Saturdays and the withdrawal of the of the summer-only Sunday evening timetable.
- 5.11. The supported journeys affected are entirely funded by those authorities and operate mostly within their boundaries. However these proposals include the withdrawal of the 2245 Bournemouth to Lymington journey, which is used by an average of 0 or 1 passengers as it passes through Hampshire to return to the Lymington depot. As a consequence of withdrawal of the summer Sunday evening journeys, the commercial 1805 Lymington to Bournemouth journey would also no longer run. This journey is used by an average of 4.5 passengers in Hampshire.
- 5.12. Two services would change from Wilts & Dorset to a new operator, David Thompson Tours, but would continue to run to their existing timetables. These are Ringwood town services 136/137 and service 41 which provides peak hour journeys between Cranborne, Fordingbridge and Salisbury. Officers will work with the new operator to ensure that the transition is a smooth one and that the services continue to be well publicised.

6. Consultation

- 6.1. Details of the proposed tenders were circulated to local County Councillors, relevant parish councils, New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park Authority, and comments invited before the tenders were issued. A presentation was also given to the New Forest Transport Community Action Network on 19 November 2009.
- 6.2. Those consulted were also invited to a meeting of the New Forest Passenger Transport Forum on 22 January 2010 after tenders were returned.
- 6.3. Comments received mostly expressed the wish that existing service levels be retained and enhancements explored. However, against the background of rising tender prices the retention of some local provision was seen to be desirable, even if the number of journeys was reduced. This has been reflected in the actions proposed.
- 6.4. Subsequently, the local County Council Members (Councillors Dash, Evans, Harrison, Kendal, Mans, McEvoy, Rice, Rippon-Swaine and Thornber) and relevant parish councils directly affected by the timetable changes proposed in this report have been contacted for their views, along with the District Council and National Park Authority.
- 6.5. These organisations have also been invited to contribute to the cost of retaining the existing service levels, where appropriate and if desired. No offers of funding have been received.
- 6.6. Councillor Dash has no comments to raise.
- 6.7. Councillor Mans has commented that service 35 is an important link for Lyndhurst and that Burley would be cut off from public transport if it is discontinued.
- 6.8. Councillor McEvoy has indicated that, given the alternatives that serve Hardley and connect at Hythe, she is satisfied with the proposals for Service 112.
- 6.9. Councillor Rippon-Swaine has commented that commercial service X5 offers better opportunities for Ringwood than service 35.
- 6.10. Councillor Thornber supports the recommendation relating to service 35 but has requested more information regarding services 112 and 191 to 195.
- 6.11. Following comments received about the suggested timetable for service 112, some changes to that timetable are being negotiated with the bus company, within the funding level identified in item 5.6.

7. Future direction

- 7.1. The award of these tenders and the taxi-share represent the best means to meet the public transport travel needs of the local community.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1. That approval be given to award tenders for new four year bus subsidy contracts for the New Forest area, at a cost of £991,246 per annum, of which £722,632 is attributable to the bus subsidy budget. This will retain the widest travel opportunities within value for money criteria and available budget limits.
- 8.2. That authority be delegated to the Director of Environment to investigate the provision of a community transport alternative or a taxi-share service between Lyndhurst, Burley and Ringwood.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

1.1. The proposals in this report maintain accessibility for the widest section of the community.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. No impact.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?
 - Maintaining journey opportunities by bus will result in fewer journeys being made by car, whilst greater use of taxi-share matches supply to use.
- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?
 - This recommendation will have a significant positive effect on sustainable transport provision.