

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**Decision Report**

Decision Maker:	Executive Member – Environment and Transport
Date:	6 March 2012
Title:	Whitehill Bordon Bus Service Proposals
Reference:	3635
Report From:	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

Contact name: Katya Holloway

Tel: 01962 846813

Email: katya.holloway@hants.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to seek approval to begin the tender process for a new, local bus service for Whitehill and Bordon. The details for this proposed service have been developed following extensive assessment of suitable routes, stakeholder and public consultation.
- 1.2. The Draft Framework Masterplan and Transport Strategy for the Whitehill Bordon Project recommended improvements to local bus services as part of the 'Early-Wins' projects to improve existing services and support future development.
- 1.3. Three Options were developed for further consultation: Option 1 provides a local, town-based service only; Option 2 provides a local town-based service, with the potential to link to commercial public transport services to the south, and to be adaptive to local needs, Option 3 provides a wider service, incorporating a large number of the outlying villages of Whitehill Bordon. These Options all aimed to achieve the best service for local residents, within the available budget made available through grant funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
- 1.4. Following stakeholder and public consultation, Option 2 has emerged as the preferred of the three Options. This provides a local, town-based service around Whitehill Bordon, but also has the capacity to provide additional links further afield, in order to best service local demand, and to link with other commercial services, in order to improve public transport accessibility for residents.
- 1.5. This paper seeks to
 - set out the background to the project;
 - provide a brief description of the three proposed bus service options;
 - provide an overview of the results of the public consultation;

- seek approval to being the tender process to deliver the new service; and
- briefly consider the future direction of the project (next steps).

2. Contextual information

Whitehill Bordon Eco-town and Early-Wins Bus Service Improvements

- 2.1. The Transport Strategy produced to support the Draft Framework Masterplan for Whitehill Bordon conceptualised a series of bus improvements which could be brought forward before development as 'Early Win' schemes. This identified town-wide routes, local area loops and strategic connections. The announcement of the town as one of the first wave Eco-towns brought funding to the town for the delivery of demonstration projects which seek to change attitudes, prepare areas for growth and development and to trial new and innovative technology.
- 2.2. As a key local priority, and an area where improvement is possible, the project is seeking to deliver bus service improvements in the local area which can generate a shift in both attitude and behaviour away from a car-based transport system to more sustainable choices and which will provide a travel choice for local residents. These service improvements also offer the ability to trial new low carbon vehicle technology to inform future service delivery.
- 2.3. In 2007 Hampshire County Council carried out an extensive survey to understand accessibility in Whitehill Bordon, which included a large circulation questionnaire, and which identified that there was a clear dissatisfaction with current public transport provision. More recent consultation events as part of the Whitehill Bordon project have re-enforced local dissatisfaction with the choice of local public transport currently available.
- 2.4. A poor public perception, lack of local route coverage and reliance on sub-regional routes for town connections identifies the need for improvements in how public transport services are provided in and around the town in order to promote an increased use of public transport and to provide a real alternative to the car. Additionally current town travel is dominated by the private car, with higher rates for car mode share in the town than the majority of Hampshire, and there are real accessibility issues for anyone living in the surrounding areas who, against local statistics, does not benefit from accessibility to a car.

Proposed Options

- 2.5. A full assessment of potential routes was undertaken during May and June 2011. A Bus Service Options Appraisal Report was prepared which considered potential routing options, service constraints, potential patronage and available technology. This Bus Service Options Appraisal Report is appended to this Report.

- 2.6. As a result of this assessment, and based on previous consultation, three options were designed, agreed and put forward for public consultation.

Option 1 – Town Based Service

- 2.7. This provides a local, town based service, replacing the existing Hampshire County Council Funded Bordon Link taxi share service with a public service (non-bookable) and expanding the area in which the current taxi share system operates, ensuring it serves main destinations and residential areas of the town.
- 2.8. This option increases accessibility throughout Whitehill, Bordon, Lindford and Standford. The route covers two loops (in a figure of eight) and returns to the town centre after each separate loop to minimise route journey times. This option provides a fairly frequent service (covering both loops and two visits to the town centre each hour), and ensures the bus is highly visible to local residents. Services would operate hourly throughout the day with potential for evening services (depending upon Tender Submissions).

Option 2 - Town Based Service with Greatham Connection

- 2.9. As set out in Option 1, but this option includes an additional link to Blackmoor, Greatham and Longmoor in order to fill the gap in public transport service provision to the south, linking at Greatham to Service 38 which travels to Alton, Selborne, Greatham, Liss and Petersfield, 5 times a day. This additional link to the south could operate on selected loops only, in order to maximise the frequency of the service within the town. Depending on flexibility of the service this could cover both loops and two visits to the town centre every 1-1.5 hours.
- 2.10. There is currently a gap in the public transport service travelling south of Whitehill Bordon, apart from one service provided on a Wednesday, which travels to Petersfield for market day. This Option 2 would improve accessibility for Whitehill Bordon residents travelling south and also for residents from Greatham/Liss who would like to travel to Whitehill Bordon. This route also serves the residential area of Blackmoor, improving accessibility and travel options for these residents.

Option 3 – Wider Area Local Service

- 2.11. This option provides a service that performs three loops, incorporating the main residential and commercial areas of Whitehill Bordon, the outlying villages around the town, and provides a link to public transport services to the south.
- 2.12. This option would serve main locations such as shops, doctors surgeries and schools and nearby villages, which may currently have only a school service or none at all. This service option would link with Lindford, Headley, Headley Down, Standford, Oakhanger, Kingsley, Blackmoor, Greatham and Longmoor, as well as Bordon and Whitehill, providing a broad coverage of local populations.

2.13. The service returns to the town centre after each individual loop. This increases the time to complete the whole circuit, but is considered essential in order that passengers are able to reach the most popular destinations, without having to complete more than one loop. Passengers would be unwilling to use the service if it completed the whole circuit (each of the three loops) with only one visit to the town centre. However, due to the length of route for this option, it would take around 3.5 hours to complete all three circuits, meaning this option would deliver only 2 services per day.

Public Consultation Exercise for the Three Options

2.14. Between September and December 2011 the proposals set out in the report were consulted on amongst stakeholders, residents and other members of the local community. The aims and objectives of the consultation were to give residents of Whitehill Bordon and surrounding villages the opportunity to:

- feed back views on the viability and usefulness to them of the three proposed bus options; and
- provide information on how the preferred option might be improved.

2.15. The details of this consultation are set out below, and a consultation report is appended to this Report which provides a full analysis of the consultation exercise and results.

Consultation Activity 2011	Timing	Duration
<p>Eco-town Team Report was circulated to Eco-town team for comments</p>	Aug - Sep	2 weeks
<p>Councillors Report circulated and presented to Cllr Carew and Whitehill Bordon Town Council</p>	Sep	
<p>Present relevant background information Bus options exhibition boards during Master plan consultation period</p> <p>Full report plus summary published on www.whitehillbordon.com</p>	Oct - Dec	6 weeks
<p>Notice of consultation Contact sheet inviting residents to be kept up-to-date on transport consultation distributed at Master plan consultations and signposting to www.whitehillbordon.com for further information</p>		
<p>Response to options 10,359 distribution of options descriptions and freepost feedback questionnaire to all households</p>		

and businesses in Whitehill Bordon and surrounding villages.	2 - 18 Nov	2 weeks
Online options descriptions and survey on www.whitehillbordon.com/bus-options/		
c.400 paper survey distribution to key stakeholder groups in Whitehill Bordon and surrounding villages, including Post Offices, Library, Forest Centre, theatre.		
Parish council consultations	2-18 Nov	2 weeks
Feedback		
To be posted on www.whitehillbordon.com/bus-options/	Jan 2012	

- 2.16. In total 702 responses were received by Friday, 18 November 2011 providing a response rate of 6.5%.
- 2.17. From the responses obtained, there were some clear preferred destinations. Respondents want to be able to travel into Whitehill Bordon, on a regular and frequent service, and would also like to be able to travel easily to other destinations such as Petersfield, Liphook Station, and Alton.
- 2.18. When asked what their journeys were using buses, a large number (50%) of respondents did not reply, suggesting that they do not use bus services. Those that do use the bus are mainly visiting local shops, the Forest Centre, medical appointments and social visits.

Preferred Option

- 2.19. Option 2 was the most preferred of the three options, followed by Option 1.
- 2.20. However, a large proportion of respondents indicated that they were unlikely to use any of the proposed options. It should be noted that these results only represent the views of around 6.5% of the local population, and of this 6.5% the results indicate that a large number are not existing bus users, and unlikely to use future bus services.
- 2.21. There was a perception for a few respondents that the service would require a long walk to pick-up points, and there were also concerns about access, cost and connectivity with other services. As well as being the preferred option, Option 2 received the fewest comments regarding why people wouldn't use it.
- 2.22. For a great many people the bus service is considered irrelevant, as they have no wish to visit the areas serviced by it or they use alternative transport (either cars or by foot).

- 2.23. Option 3 received the greatest number of comments on why it was not likely to be used. The greatest barrier to using this Option related to frequency and timing (particularly the long route journey time). There were several references to connecting with Liphook, which it is assumed is because Option 3 presents a wider loop. Analysis of the question following this, reveals that a large proportion of respondents would like to connect with Liphook Station.
- 2.24. Whitehill Town Council are strongly supportive of the provision of a new service and have identified Option 2 as the preferred option. The Town Council would wish to see flexibility built into the contract to ensure that changes to the routing could be made at a later stage to respond to local circumstances and to maximise patronage.

Consultation Summary

- 2.25. It is felt that the proposed bus service has been adequately consulted on, within the limits of time and budget constraints.
- 2.26. Of the three options consulted on, Option 2 appears to be the most likely to be used and is the preferred service for the consultation respondents and the Whitehill Town Council. However, respondents did highlight the desire for suitable links to other destinations, such as Petersfield, Alton and Liphook station. This is something that has been highlighted in the full bus service options report.
- 2.27. The lack of public transport service connections to the south was identified in the full report, and by consultation respondents. Whilst it is recognised that the funds available to provide this service are limited, and have been made available to provide immediate and initial improvements to 'local' (i.e. Whitehill/Bordon) town services, an innovative approach to delivering the service, in order to link with other areas and allow adaptability and responsiveness of the service, will be a consideration of the tender process.
- 2.28. Other areas of concern, such as accessibility of the service, proximity of pick up/drop off points, cost and the details of the route, are all areas that will be fully addressed during detailed specification of the service, will be made clear to residents through a publicity campaign prior to the start of the service. This will hopefully mitigate any perceived fears residents may have over their ability to use the service, and will encourage the greatest patronage levels.

2.29. Conclusions

- 2.30. Based on the results of the public consultation, and a thorough review of the area and existing services, it is recommended that a new service be tendered for, based on the route/frequency of Option 2, but with the ability to intelligently link with other commercial services to the south (particularly Service 38), and to key destinations such as Petersfield and Liphook station. The service should, if possible, provide a regular frequency link and operate at key times to allow people to access employment and education, which may require links to other bus or train services.

2.31. Advice is being taken from Passenger Transport Group (PTG) to identify the most suitable vehicle size and engine/technology for the route, either minibus or small standard bus, and the suitability of the vehicle options (hybrid or the latest Euro standard engine vehicle with additional filter and efficiency technologies fitted). This information will be specified in the Tender documents and the successful supplier will need to demonstrate how they will meet the sustainability requirements of the service.

3. Finance

- 3.1. The new bus service will be funded entirely from the DCLG Grant for the Whitehill Bordon Eco-town Project. This DCLG Grant is ring-fenced financing to bring forward projects associated with the Whitehill Bordon Project, and cannot be used for other purposes. The total projected cost of £625,000 towards the delivery of improved Bus Services within Whitehill Bordon has been transferred from East Hampshire District Council to Hampshire County Council.
- 3.2. Based on industry costs of a service costing around £120,000 per annum, this would potentially fund a one-vehicle bus service for 5 years. The final service will depend upon the tender returns, but the service will be designed to maximise the sum of this available funding.

4. Performance

- 4.1. The future success of the new bus service will be closely monitored with route performance and patronage monitored throughout the contract. The Tender Documents will require that the successful operator supplies the County Council with the relevant data throughout the contract period.

5. Other key issues

- 5.1. There has been ongoing dialogue with County, District, Town and Parish Councillors as part of the engagement processes for the Whitehill Bordon Project.
- 5.2. The local Members for Whitehill Bordon and Lindford and for surrounding divisions have been consulted on the draft documents. They support the recommendation to develop a bus service based on Option 2.

6. Future direction

- 6.1. Service Delivery Programme

Timescales	Key Event/Milestone
December 2011-January 2012	Circulate report to Eco-town team and PTG for comments
January – March 2012	Enter round of briefings to reach Decision Day 6 March
March – September 2012	Implement the tender process
September - October 2012	Deliver service

7. Recommendations

- 7.1. That approval be given to begin the formal tendering process for a new local bus service for Whitehill Bordon, based on Option 2 as described in this report, for a period of up to 5 years at a total cost of up to £625,000.
- 7.2. That the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment be given delegated authority to award this contract, following the tendering process, and to agree any subsequent variations to the service required to meet operational needs, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and Transport.

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

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Whitehill Bordon Emerging Transport Strategy	3183	6/09/2011
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

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.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
Whitehill Bordon Bus Proposals Final Draft Jan2012	Hantsfile
Whitehill Bordon Bus Consultation Final Report 2011-12-22	Hantsfile

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

1.1. Not applicable

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. Not applicable

3. Climate Change:

3.1. How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

The improved bus service forms part of the Interim Transport Strategy (Sept 2011) for Whitehill Bordon, and is part of the overall strategy to promote sustainable travel where possible. Reducing sole occupancy car use and increasing bus use will reduce carbon emissions

3.2. How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

The bus service improvements focus on tackling climate change through the promotion of sustainable travel, the reduction in pollution associated with travel and reducing car dependency.