

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Environment and Transport
Date:	11 July 2017
Title:	Retendering of Basingstoke/Alresford Cango Bus Service
Report From:	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to detail the outcome of a tender for the replacement of the Cango C41 service, Basingstoke – Alresford service following engagement on the provision of alternative destinations and timetable options.
- 1.2. This paper proposes a plan of action to retain an essential transport link for the community, thereby supporting quality of life and well-being.
- 1.3. The proposed tender will offer an alternative timetable for three days per week with a service pattern which takes into account the results of engagement with service users and community representatives.
- 1.4. Awarding this tender ensures that a transport link will continue to be provided at a cost of £36,940 per annum from the Bus Subsidy Budget which delivers value for money and allows savings for the Home to School Transport budget.
- 1.5. The C41 service was extended until 3 September 2017 to allow engagement with service users, parish councils and Members so that the proposed timetable could best reflect their priorities within a budget that took into account the loss of the Home to School Transport funding element.
- 1.6. Approval of these arrangements today will allow good time to publicise the new service before it starts in September.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. The Passenger Transport Review, implemented in January 2015, retained subsidised bus services across Hampshire on an equitable basis, albeit to reduced timetables in line with the lower funding levels available.

- 2.2. Cango was introduced in 2001 as part of pioneering work by Hampshire County Council following a successful bid for Government funding. The funding provided for a fleet of vehicles, with a number of innovative features, including a computer and communications system which allowed the buses to 'roam' over a wider area, so replacing a number of separate bus routes which had each struggled to carry sufficient passengers to be sustainable. Passengers rang in to book their journey and their bookings determined the route that Cango took with limited opportunity to simply turn up and go like a conventional bus service.
- 2.3. However, although innovative and copied in other parts of the country, the areas where Cango worked best did not have large numbers of potential bus users, and for a number of reasons the cost per passenger trip remained high.
- 2.4. The previous C41 Cango service cost £111,295 a year after allowing for fares income of £14,324 which came to the County Council. Of this £40,311 came from the Children's Services Home to School Transport budget for a primary school transport service.
- 2.5. Changes to pupil numbers mean that it will be more economic for the County Council to carry pupils on another existing school contract. Without the Home to School Transport income, the cost of an all day Cango service, six days a week, became no longer sustainable.
- 2.6. The three day a week timetable option is already applied to services elsewhere in the county and locally in Alton. The main use of the current service is for shopping (47%), followed by social/other (29%). Medical trips account for 6.4% of journeys and employment 6%.

3. Overview of retendering

- 3.1. Bids were received from Cresta Coaches, Stagecoach and Wheelers Travel and it is proposed to award the contract to Cresta Coaches.

4. Overview of Procurement

- 4.1. The contract has been procured using the Public Bus Dynamic Purchasing system and assessed 100% on price.
- 4.2. The start date of this contract is 4 September 2017. It is proposed that this contract will be run for 15 months and, if then required, it can be brought in line with all other Basingstoke services which will all be re-tendered for a start date at the end of December 2018.
- 4.3. The anticipated County Council spend for this period of time would be met from the bus subsidy budget at a cost of £36,940 per annum.

5. Finance

- 5.1. The current cost of the Basingstoke – Alresford service C41 contract for a Monday – Saturday service is £125,619 which currently is made up from £70,984 from the bus subsidy budget, £40,311 from Children’s Services Home to School Transport budget and with £14,324 from fares income, reflecting the previous demand responsive style of service.
- 5.2. The proposed contract will provide a three day a week service at an annual cost to the bus subsidy budget of £36,940, with fares income for the service staying with the operator in line with other local bus contracts. In addition it will provide an annual saving of £40,311 to the Home to School Transport budget for the Children’s Services Department.

6. Performance

- 6.1. The proposed tender option will provide a three day per week service to the area at a cost of £36,940 per annum and offers journey opportunities to Basingstoke and Alresford.
- 6.2. Prior to tenders being invited, services and passengers were surveyed. The proposed option will provide a service on three days per week with savings to the tender cost reflecting the loss of financial contribution from the school contract.

7. Survey responses

- 7.1. Passengers were surveyed regarding timetable options over a two week period in June as to their priority for destinations, Alton (following an earlier suggestion from the parishes), Alresford and Basingstoke; which were their top three preferred days of travel; and whether they wanted a half day or full day at each of the destinations.
- 7.2. Local Members, Cllr Kemp-Gee, Cllr McNair-Scott, and Cllr Porter were written to in March and again in June with details of the survey and copies of the questionnaire, as were the parish councils in the area served by the route.
- 7.3. Members’ responded that the County Council should canvas service users, identify where they lived and consider alternatives such as Taxi-share. Users were surveyed as detailed below and it was noted that most users lived in Axford or Preston Candover followed by Swarraton and Old Alresford, and then equally in Bradley, Lower or Upper Wield and Farleigh Wallop or Ellisfield. The new route will serve these communities. The busiest journeys carry too many passengers for a Taxi-share without some users having to change their time of travel, but tenders were invited for a 16 seater minibus as a suitable alternative which could be more economic and bring extra supplier interest. Timetable options included the ability to fit around other local services to offer potential economies.

- 7.4. Parishes responded that Alton should be considered as a destination, as this had been on the route in the past. This was added to the user survey.
- 7.5. A total of 82 passengers were surveyed over the six days of the current timetable and across 20 journeys so that each departure was surveyed at least twice over a two week period. This followed a survey of levels of use and travel patterns earlier in the year. The proposed timetable was developed as a result of the responses received.
- 7.6. Following suggestions received, the new route will additionally serve Basingstoke railway station and 'the top of the town' shopping area in Basingstoke for the Post Office. The section of route which serves the Wilds has been rearranged to serve the centre of the village in Preston Candover to bring the service closer to existing and potential passengers. Alton was not a popular choice so has not been added as this would have meant reducing the journeys or time available in either Basingstoke, by far the most popular destination, or Alresford, which has a bus to Alton every 30 minutes.

8. Future direction

- 8.1. The award of this tender represents the best means to meet the local communities' priorities for an essential transport link. The proposed contract would run for 15 months and, if then required, can be brought in line with all other Basingstoke services which will all be re-tendered for a start date at the end of December 2018.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1. That approval be given to award a tender to replace the C41 public bus service contract under the Public Bus Dynamic Purchasing system in the Basingstoke – Alresford area, to commence on 4 September 2017 and operate until December 2018 to bring it into line with other Basingstoke services which are due to be re-tendered from that date, at a cost of £46,175 over the 15 months duration, to be met from the Bus Subsidy Budget.

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

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	No
Maximising well-being:	Yes
Enhancing our quality of place:	No

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment: Passenger Transport Review and Hampshire Concessionary Travel Scheme 2015/2016	6029	27 October 2014
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>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

A detailed consultation exercise was carried out ahead of the Passenger Transport Review, implemented from January 2015, together with a detailed Equalities Impact Assessment. The information from these has informed this retendering alongside the more recent and specific surveys of users.

Journeys throughout the day and across the week were surveyed in early 2017 to identify levels of use, journey purpose and boarding and alighting points and in June 2017 to canvas users' priorities for destination, days of travel and length of stay.

The new route covers all the areas previously served and offers improved access in Basingstoke and Preston Candover. Although the service will run three days a week, not six, surveys show that most users travel one or two days a week or less. Concessionary pass holders make up 60% of week day passengers. Although this group would therefore be affected more than some others, surveys also show that 76% of journeys are for shopping and social purposes and the proposed service will maintain an essential transport link to facilitate those journeys.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. It is considered that the decision will have no impact on crime and disorder.

3. Climate Change:

a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

Delivering an effective public transport system within available funding levels provides an alternative to the use of the private car.

Not including a school run within this service reduces the impact at the school by reducing the amount of school transport vehicles from 3 to 2.

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

An effective public transport alternative matches provision to need, allows users to share journeys and minimises carbon emissions.