

CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Local Sustainable Transport Fund – GPRS Upgrade of the Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) System		
Date of Meeting:	Friday 4th May 2012		
Report of:	Strategic Director, Place		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Rob Dickin	Tel: 292233
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Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan No: <i>To be inserted by Democratic Services</i>	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Bus usage in Brighton & Hove is increasing by approximately 5% per year, with the number of journeys increasing from 30 million in 2000/01 to nearly 43 million in 2010/11. This is against the national trend for decreasing bus use for everyday travel. The high levels of bus patronage across the city contributes to the city's sustainable transport targets set out in the Local Transport Plan (LTP), and contributes to national carbon reduction targets set out in the Climate Change Act 2008.
- 1.4 The current Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system provides reliable bus information direct to bus stops and encourages public transport use. However, it is a dated system, utilising increasingly obsolete Private Mobile Radio (PMR) technology, which is becoming prohibitively expensive to 'patch up' and repair. The existing service and maintenance contract for the system expires in July 2013. There is a consensus between all the current stakeholders that the current system needs to be updated to ensure a more modern and fit for purpose service, utilising General Packet Radio Service (GPRS) technology. By tendering for a new system and service provider, significant cost savings can be realised over time, contributing to the council's Value for Money programme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Transport & Public Realm supports the upgrade of the RTPI system to GPRS and grants permission for officers to begin the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) tendering process to secure a provider of a GPRS system and an ongoing maintenance contract.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet Member for Transport & Public Realm grants permission for officers to plan for the rollout of the new system by July 2013.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The current Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system being one of the first in the UK was installed in 2001, and utilises Private Mobile Radio (PMR) technology to communicate the location of buses, providing Real Time Information at bus stops. Currently there are 169 RTPI signs at bus stops across the city, with two in West Sussex, and seven in East Sussex. There are 280 buses with the onboard equipment required to transmit their location onto the system.
- 3.2 The success of the current system, which is recognised nationally as a best practice example of partnership working, can be attributed to the strong working relationship between the council and Brighton & Hove Bus and Coach Company. Both organisations have committed to joint fund the system since 2001, and the commitment of Brighton & Hove Buses is key to making it work.
- 3.3.1 East Sussex County Council (ESCC) is also a committed member of the consortium that utilises the current system, and they remain committed to a joint funding arrangement when the system is upgraded to GPRS. Brighton & Hove City Council is currently in discussion with ESCC to explore if a joint procurement process will lead to further cost savings.
- 3.4 The contract for the service and ongoing maintenance is currently held by Trapeze ITS, and is due to expire in July 2013. The proposed procurement of the new GPRS system is bringing forward a retendering process that will have to take place in 2013.
- 3.5 Due to its age, the current system experiences increasing levels of signal degradation, high levels of failure, and increased levels of radio interference from the continent. There is also a strong possibility that in the immediate future OFCOM will serve notice to sell off the frequency currently used by the system, which would mean a compulsory upgrade to GPRS.
- 3.6 There is a shared objective by all of the consortium members to upgrade the current system to GPRS technology, which would improve the coverage across Brighton & Hove, as well as securing future compatibility across administrative boundaries. Other local authorities across the country with successful bus Real Time systems are also beginning to upgrade their systems to GPRS, to ensure that the technology is fit for purpose and able to continue working effectively into the future.
- 3.7 The new GPRS RTPI system may also lead to substantial cost savings over time, with expected savings to be made by undertaking a competitive tendering process to procure the latest GPRS technology, cheaper Real Time signs at bus stops, cheaper onboard equipment, lower maintenance costs, and lower costs for transmitting data by GPRS rather than PMR.
- 3.8 A new GPRS RTPI system will also enable other bus operators running buses in Brighton & Hove, as well as any future operators, to have their services included on the Real Time system at a lower cost to them, as it requires cheaper onboard

equipment than the current system. At present other operators have declined to invest in onboard equipment for the PMR system due to the prohibitively high cost. Through £1.2m secured by Brighton & Hove City council from the Shoreham Harbour Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF) for public transport improvements Stagecoach were able to equip the service 700 buses with GPRS equipment, enabling this service to be Real Time enabled on a select number of signs along the A259, Churchill Square and the Old Steine. This is a good indication of how a new GPRS system will improve other bus operator access onto the citywide network.

- 3.9 The project to update the system to GPRS was included in the successful bid to the Department for Transport under the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, which was awarded in July 2011, and runs through to 2015.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 An internal consultation has been undertaken with officers from Procurement, ICT, Transport Operations and Traffic Systems, and Public Transport.
- 4.2 An external consultation has also been undertaken with key stakeholders that support the upgrade to GPRS, this includes:
- Brighton & Hove Bus and Coach Company
 - East Sussex County Council
 - West Sussex County Council
 - Stagecoach
 - The Big Lemon
 - Countryliner
 - Metrobus

FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1.1 The Local Sustainable Transport Fund covers the four years from 2011/12 to 2014/15. The sum of £650,000 has been set aside in the capital budget to fund the upgrade of the RTPI system to GPRS. Brighton and Hove Buses have committed to contribute £400,000 to upgrade their onboard equipment and implement new GPRS signs in residential areas along the Lewes Road LSTF corridor.
- 5.1.2 The indicative savings to be made from the upgrade of the system to GPRS is projected to be approximately £500,000 over five years, through reduced maintenance costs, and a reduction in ongoing costs resulting from the removal of the PMR infrastructure.

Finance Officer Consulted: Karen Brookshaw

Date: 19/04/12

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 As the value of the proposed contract is above the EU procurement threshold, the opportunity to tender will need to be advertised by an OJEU notice, and the timescales set out in the Public Contract Regulations 2006 will be followed. In accordance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders, the Contract will need to be in a form approved by the Head of Law.

Lawyer Consulted: Jill Whittaker

Date: 30/03/12

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The upgrade of the RTPi system to GPRS will improve accessibility for all groups to public transport services in isolated areas of the city. This will also improve access to services and employment centres. The new GPRS system will also be compatible with the Talking Bus Stops system, providing text to speech functionality for blind and partially sighted users.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Sustainability is promoted within all contract procurement. The upgrade to GPRS will help to promote sustainable transport use, thereby decreasing carbon emissions across the city.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 None identified directly in relation to this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 None identified directly in relation to this report.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 Promoting sustainable transport use assists in promoting physical activity and active lifestyles.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 Improving accessibility to public transport assists in improving access to employment and services

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The current PMR system could be maintained and 'patched up' as required, but this would require an increasing maintenance budget to repair an ageing system. It would not improve the coverage of the system to areas that currently can not be connected due to poor radio strength, and if OFCOM sells the radio frequency currently used, then an upgrade would be essential. Therefore this option has been discounted.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 As the current service and maintenance contract is coming to an end, the consortium members need to begin planning for a new contract. The LSTF funding provides a perfect opportunity to begin the process.
- 7.1 To gain permission to begin the OJEU tendering process to secure a new service provider to upgrade the RTP1 system to GPRS.
- 7.2 To begin planning for the rollout of the new GPRS system.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

None

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None

