

CABINET  
16<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2003

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**SALISBURY REAL TIME PASSENGER INFORMATION SYSTEM**  
**SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT -**  
**WILTS AND DORSET BUS COMPANY LIMITED**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To seek approval in principle to the proposed Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the County Council and the Wilts and Dorset Bus Company Limited.

**Background**

2. A real time bus passenger information system is an integral part of Salisbury's Intelligent Transport System, funded through the Local Transport Plan (LTP), and due to be implemented during 2003. The proposed system will provide passenger information (and priority for buses at selected traffic signals) utilising global positioning technology, a private radio data network and dot matrix displays at bus stops for City and Bemerton services.
3. In March 2002, the County Council was successful in securing £829,500 to extend the system to four inter-urban routes radiating from Salisbury to Bath, Pewsey (towards Swindon), Downton (towards Poole) and Whaddon (towards Southampton).
4. An additional bid for unspent Supplementary Credit Approval (for 2002-03) totalling £254,000 was also successful. This will cover additional costs of the Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) extension which are now evident as a result of the tendering process.
5. In the LTP Annual Progress Report authorities were asked to report progress in developing bus information policies as required by the Transport Act 2000. The LTP 2002 settlement letter reminded authorities of the importance of adequate bus service information in increasing bus patronage.
6. Tenders for the installation and maintenance of the RTPI system have been sought and it is intended to award the contract to the successful tenderer subject to the completion of an SLA with the Wilts and Dorset Bus Company Limited covering a 15-year period. The Bus Company will operate the system on its buses in Salisbury and beyond. The system is capable of expansion to include additional operators and routes in the future.

## **The Service Level Agreement**

7. The full Agreement is being finalised but the key points are summarised below.
8. The County Council will install the system by which bus stops are equipped with an electronic system to provide information to passengers on the expected lapse of time before the bus, or buses, will arrive. The system also provides for bus priority at traffic signals as well as fleet management and schedule adherence for the bus operator.
9. Wilts and Dorset will make phased contributions to the cost of installing the system at the rate of £2,000 per bus, the current size of the fleet being 102 buses.
10. The contract for the provision of the system includes the first five years' maintenance. Wilts and Dorset will make an annual contribution to the maintenance costs in years 6 to 15, which will leave approximately £70,000 per annum outstanding.
11. Salisbury District Council is currently committed to contributing £105,000 per annum to the annual costs of running and maintaining the other elements of Salisbury's Intelligent Transport System (Urban Traffic Control/Closed Circuit Television and Car Park Guidance) and also to meeting the operating costs of the Beehive Park and Ride site. These costs are being met from income from car parking charges. The increasing demands on that source of funding from the anticipated completion of the Wilton Park and Ride site in 2003 and the Downton Road site in 2004 mean that the District Council is unable to commit to meeting the longer term RTPI maintenance costs at the present time. However, senior District Council members have agreed to use their best endeavours to ensure that the District will be in a position to make a significant contribution at the appropriate time.
12. Without a commitment regarding the funding of the longer term maintenance costs, the RTPI scheme cannot go ahead. It falls to the County Council to underwrite the balance of these costs in years 6 to 15 of the Agreement.
13. Members' attention is drawn to the provisions in the Agreement should the County Council not meet its obligations. The Bus Company would be entitled to retain the on-board computer units and the depot terminal should it wish to continue to operate the system or, alternatively, recover compensation from the County Council equivalent to its initial capital investment, reduced appropriately to allow for depreciation.

## **Financial Implications**

14. Entering into the SLA with the Bus Company commits the County Council to meeting the balance of the annual maintenance costs in years 6 to 15 of the Agreement, a figure of approximately £70,000 per annum, in the absence of any contribution from Salisbury District Council.

15. In the unlikely event that the County Council resolved to terminate the Agreement, it would be liable to compensate the Bus Company up to a maximum figure of £200,000.

### **Conclusion: Options Considered**

16. The Government has made it clear that RTPI systems are an essential element in increasing bus patronage. In order to progress the Salisbury RTPI system, it is necessary for the County Council to enter into an SLA with Wilts and Dorset Bus Company Limited. The Agreement will cover a 15-year period and it is necessary for the County Council to underwrite the balance of the maintenance costs before the Agreement can be completed. If the County Council does not complete the SLA with Wilts and Dorset, the RTPI system in Salisbury and the extension onto the four inter-urban routes cannot operate and the funding provided by the Government will have to be returned.

### **Recommendation**

17. That the Cabinet approves in principle the proposed Service Level Agreement with the Wilts and Dorset Bus Company Limited, subject to the details being finalised with the Bus Company by the Director of Environmental Services and the Solicitor to the Council, and notes the implications for the County Council under the Agreement.

### **Reason for Recommendation**

18. To enable the installation of the Real Time Passenger Information system in Salisbury and its extension onto four routes radiating from Salisbury to be progressed.

**RICHARD J. LANDER**

Director of Environmental Services

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**The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:**

None.

**Environmental impact of the Recommendation contained in this Report:**

RTPI is an important element of the Salisbury Transport Plan designed to limit the growth of private car traffic in Salisbury and the surrounding area.