

Division(s):

CABINET – 17 JANUARY 2012

RENEWAL OF REAL TIME BUS PASSENGER INFORMATION (RTPI) SYSTEM CONTRACT

Report by Deputy Director, Highways & Transport

Introduction

1. This report:
 - (a) Outlines the approach taken to procuring new contract services for the Oxfordshire Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system - 'Oxontime', to reflect changes in technology and public expectations;
 - (b) Seeks approval to award a contract to the supplier submitting the most economically advantageous tender on the basis of quality and cost;
 - (c) Provides an update on the development of the system, and summarises the public response and performance standards attained.

Policy Framework

2. The Oxfordshire RTPI system has formed an important element of the Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) strategy for public transport since 2004, promoting sustainable travel choice as part of a wider set of measures delivered in partnership with the principal Oxfordshire bus operators, including the introduction of smart-card ticketing and low-emission vehicles.
3. RTPI services support the Council's stated LTP3 objectives to:
 - (a) Develop and increase the use of high quality, welcoming public transport;
 - (b) Reduce congestion;
 - (c) Secure infrastructure and services to support development.
4. The current Local Transport Plan (LTP3) states that the Council intends to improve the operation of its real time information system, referred to as one of the best performing systems in the UK.

Project Delivery

5. In November 2002 the County Council gave authority to proceed to tender for the implementation of an RTPI system, initially covering a limited number of

trial routes, but with scope for future expansion on a county-wide basis. A contract was subsequently awarded to Advanced Communications & Information Systems (ACIS) Ltd with a fully operational system in place by April 2006.

6. Since 2004, both Oxford Bus Company (OBC) and Stagecoach in Oxfordshire have made a significant commitment to the delivery of RTPI in the County, including the supply of accurate data for dissemination to the public via on-street displays and other on-line media. An investment of approximately £1.4 million has been made by the bus operators over this period, directly assisting them to deliver service reliability and journey time improvements.
7. In January 2006, Cabinet approved the extension of RTPI services, allowing for geographical expansion outside of Oxford and functional development through the implementation of a text (SMS) messaging service. Developer contributions have since been utilised for specific improvements, requested through the planning process, including new displays at Bicester Village and in Kidlington. Funding has been agreed to support further developments in Bicester, Yarnton and the Science Vale UK area.
8. The Council's capital investment priorities have been delivered within budget, extending RTPI services to all areas of Oxfordshire and covering cross-boundary routes to/from Buckinghamshire and Reading. **Annex 1** shows the current distribution of RTPI services across Oxfordshire.
9. In 2008 the County Council awarded a contract to Cloud Amber Limited to supply, configure and maintain a traffic management system for Oxfordshire. RTPI is made available through an interactive, multi-modal Live Travel Information website. The website also provides access to real time congestion data, car park occupancy statistics and disruption/roadwork information, via a simple map interface – see the following link:
<http://voyager.oxfordshire.gov.uk/map.aspx>
10. The existing RTPI contract was extended in December 2008, but expires in March 2012. Officers have consequently investigated options for the continued provision of RTPI services beyond this date.

System Performance

11. The Council carries out surveys and daily monitoring of individual displays and other RTPI assets across the County. This enables the Council and bus operator partners to identify potential equipment faults for escalation and rectification by the RTPI supplier.
12. The Council meets regularly with its supplier and partners to agree actions to improve system reliability; this has led to performance improvements over time. The bus operators also help to ensure RTPI remains accurate following timetable changes and during bank holiday periods.

Future RTPI Provision

13. In 2010 the Council reviewed its options on expiry of the existing contract arrangements. It was agreed to maintain the RTPI system whilst recognising that some limited expansion might still be required, particularly where a condition of, and funded through, developer agreements. This approach would ensure no loss in benefit to the public whilst allowing the Council to secure additional infrastructure to complement housing growth.
14. Oxford Bus Company, Stagecoach in Oxfordshire and Thames Travel Ltd remain committed to the provision of RTPI in the County, support the Council's approach of renewing existing RTPI contract arrangements, and would continue to meet their share of future system costs.
15. The Council's resulting Technical Specification reflects the public expectation that RTPI (including regional traffic and congestion information) should be made more widely available through a range of different media including smart phone technologies and third party websites via nationally recognised standards for data exchange. Stringent Service Level Agreements have also been specified to promote further enhancements to system reliability.

Procurement Process

16. The County Council's Procurement Team has recommended the award of an initial four year contract to commence on 31st March 2012, with rights to extend by two years in aggregate, if required. The Council's Tender Evaluation assumes a five-year contract and the outcome which is shown in **Annex 2** reflects this.
17. Contract Procedure Rules 12-18 apply to this procurement, which has been advertised as a Service contract under the restricted procedure of the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). Following advertisement and a pre-qualification stage, a total of three tender submissions were received, including that of the incumbent – Vix Technology Ltd (formerly ACIS Ltd).
18. The quality and pricing elements of the contract evaluation have both been allocated a 50% weighting to reflect the Council's intention to focus on cost as highly as quality. Following submission of tenders the scores from both elements for all suppliers were added together to calculate the Most Economically Advantageous Tender. The Contract Award Recommendation is detailed in **Annex 3**.

Public Response

19. The Oxfordshire RTPI system provides a valued service to the public as has been evidenced through survey. A study undertaken by the Oxford Research Agency in late 2008 found that *'the live information displayed is considered reassuring to those waiting for a bus and due to its 'real time nature', is generally trusted by residents as being accurate and reliable'*.
20. The Council's www.oxontime.com text messaging and web services receive around 25,000 'hits' per month (300,000 per annum), covering bus routes throughout Oxfordshire.
21. The Public Transport Development team has received over 150 items of e-mail correspondence in 2010/11 concerning the operation of the RTPI system. The reliability and widespread availability of RTPI are considered key priorities. This service also allows officers to resolve any faults promptly.

Financial and Staff Implications

22. The maintenance cost submitted by Cloud Amber for the initial 4 year contract term is £1,223,000 in total. Other lease and communication costs totalling £149,000 bring the overall revenue requirement to £1,372,000, to be met from within Highways & Transport budgets and through supporting contributions from partner bus operators - which would represent £491,000. The County Council and bus operators will make the same percentage contributions towards the costs of maintaining the system under the new contract as now – the split being 64% (OCC) and 36% (operators).
23. The net cost to the County Council would therefore be £881,000 over the new contract term (approximately £220,000 per annum) albeit with higher figures in years 1 and 2 of the contract, reflecting the initial mobilisation costs of the new supplier (see **Annex 4**) This level of funding is already contained in the Highways & Transport budget.
24. The County Council commits a resource of 2 F.T.E. to the task of managing the RTPI contract. This work entails:
 - (a) Managing supplier and bus operator relationships, including all technical and performance aspects;
 - (b) Configuration of bus timetable data and;
 - (c) Provision of customer services to system users.

This level of resource is considered essential to afford effective project management of the contract, funded from within existing Highways & Transport staffing budgets.

RECOMMENDATION

25. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to**
- (a) authorise the Deputy Director (Highways & Transport), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, to award the contract for RTPi based on the recommendations contained in this report to Cloud Amber Ltd;**
 - (b) authorise the use of Highways & Transport budgets for the continued maintenance of RTPi services as detailed in section 22 of this report until 30th March 2016; and**
 - (c) authorise the Deputy Director, Highways & Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport to approve up to two years contract extension with suitable budgetary provision, subject to the contractor achieving appropriate standards of service delivery.**

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Background papers: Nil
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