

REPORT TO: Executive Board Sub Committee

DATE: 29 January 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Environment

SUBJECT: Local Supported Bus Service Contract - 232
Widnes - Warrington, Monday to Saturday
Evenings

WARDS: Kingsway, Appleton and Halton View

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Executive Board Sub Committee of the decision taken by the Operational Director (Highways, Transportation and Logistics) to award local supported bus Contract Number 232 to a non lowest price tenderer in line with the requirements of Procurement Standing Order 4.2.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That Executive Board Sub Committee:-

- i) Endorse the decision by the Operational Director (Highways, Transportation and Logistics) to award local supported bus Contract Number 232 to a 'non lowest' price tenderer (Halton Borough Transport Ltd), in line with the requirements of Procurement Standing Order 4.2.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Halton Borough Council is empowered under the Transport Act 1985 to provide supported local bus services, serving communities which are not served adequately by commercially operated bus services.
- 3.2 Members will be aware that the Council has set aside £789,340 from this year's corporate revenue budget for the provision of socially necessary bus services, which are typically procured through the standard competitive tendering approach. Some of these contracts are jointly funded with neighbouring local authorities and Merseytravel (Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority and Executive).
- 3.3 Included within the network of supported local bus services, is a long established contract jointly funded by both Halton Borough Council and Warrington Borough Council for the provision of an hourly Monday to Saturday evening service between Widnes Town Centre and Warrington Town Centre via Halton View and Penketh. The costs of the contract are shared by both authorities in proportion to the share of operated mileage of the contract through each local authority

area. In this instance the share of costs attributable to Halton Borough Council is 38%. Also in the case of this contract, Halton Borough Council is the lead tendering authority, and is responsible for managing the tendering process and contract quality assurance. Regular passengers surveys are undertaken to ascertain levels of usage.

3.4 As the existing Contract number 232 is due to expire on the 31st January 2009, tenders were invited from local bus companies on a standing list of bus operators, who have previously expressed their interest in undertaking local supported bus contracts. Within the tender documentation it is made clear to the tenderer that the Council will not be obliged to accept the lowest cost tender, but will also consider other quality criteria, such as – age, make and type of vehicle when assessing tenders.

3.5 The Council received valid returned tenders from eight separate bus companies. Having reviewed the tenders received, the Operational Director (Highways, Transportation and Logistics) decided to award Contract Number 232 for a period of five calendar years to Halton Borough Transport Ltd on the basis that its tender included the operation of a fully accessible low floor bus. One of the tenders who submitted a lower price than the accepted tender was disqualified, due to reported problems of vehicle maintenance and operational difficulties, when operating supported bus service contracts on behalf of a neighbouring local authority. These issues only came to light during the tendering exercise. The second lowest tenderer only offered the provision of a high step entrance bus within its submission.

3.6 A summary of the costs of the submitted tenders are shown in Figure 1 below:-

Figure 1 Summary of tenders received for local supported bus Contract 232.

Tenderer	Annual Cost (Minimum Support Contract)
A	£ 30,000
B	£ 33,072
C - Halton Borough Transport Ltd	£36,443
D	£40,000
E	£49,998
F	£50,400
G	£58,720
H	£65,000

3.7 Therefore the cost of the new replacement Contract Number 232 is £36,443 per year. The current cost of the contract with the incumbent operator is £34,048. Although there has been a small increase in the contract cost as a result of the tendering exercise, the new contract,

which will take effect from 2nd February 2009, will include the provision of a new low floor fully accessible bus which is fitted with CCTV for passenger safety and security. These features are not provided by the existing operator.

- 3.8 There will be a small change to the route of the supported 110 service, which operates Monday to Saturday evenings within Warrington Town Centre as a result of this re-tendering exercise. Due to the increased size of the vehicle to be used, by the successful tenderer, the new contract will have to operate via Priestley Street and Froghall Lane in Warrington Town Centre (serving Warrington General Hospital's Guardian Street entrance), instead of the existing route which serves the Hospital via Lovely lane. This change in route will be publicised extensively to existing passengers.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct policy implications arising from this report.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The new local supported bus Contract Number 232 represents a £2,395 increase per annum on the existing contract price which will be shared with Warrington Borough Council, in proportion to the share of operated mileage of the bus service contract through each Borough. Therefore the additional cost attributable to Halton Borough Council is £910 per annum.
- 5.2 It is also recognised that continued support for local bus service links between Halton and Warrington, during the evening period plays an important role in enabling the Borough's residents to access employment and health facilities within Warrington, and thereby helping to reduce social exclusion.
- 5.3 Furthermore, the provision of good quality public transport services can continue to support policies which promote sustainable mobility and thereby help to reduce the demand for car travel.
- 5.4 The new local support bus service Contract Number 232 secures best value for the Authority in terms of the provision of low floor fully accessible vehicles to be used by the tenderer to operate the service and the provision of on board CCTV to enhance passenger safety and security.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

There are no direct implications arising from this report for children and young people within Halton.

6.3 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Local supported bus services such as that provided by the supported evening service 110 between Widnes and Warrington provide enhanced access to employment, learning and training opportunities across the Borough of Halton and in neighbouring areas.

6.4 A Healthy Halton

This local supported bus contract provides a Monday to Saturday evening direct bus service link between Widnes and Warrington General Hospital, and thereby complements the existing shuttle bus service linking Warrington General Hospital to Halton Hospital, which is funded separately by North Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust.

6.5 A Safer Halton

The successful tenderer will provide on bus CCTV, as part of the contract. This will help to ensure better passenger safety and security whilst travelling on this service. The existing contractor does not provide a vehicle fitted with CCTV.

6.6 Halton's Urban Renewal

The provision of improved accessible transport services will help to assist residents, living in socially excluded communities, to access the new employment, training, leisure and retail facilities being provided through the regeneration of the Borough.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no direct risks associated with awarding this tender. Contributory funding has been confirmed from Warrington Borough Council.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 The provision of high quality, affordable and safe supported local bus services will help to ensure all members of the community can access a wide range of key facilities such as education, health, leisure, employment and retail. The use of supported bus services is closely monitored by the Council to ensure all sections of the community can access the services provided.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Local Supported Service Contract tender document	Bus 232 Transport Co-ordination, Rutland House, Halton Lea.	David Hall Tel 0151 4717514