

**REPORT:** Executive Board Sub-Committee

**DATE:** 16 November 2006

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Environment

**SUBJECT:** Variable Message Signs & Journey Time Monitoring System

**WARDS:** Borough Wide

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report requests the Sub-Committee's agreement to the award of contracts for the supply and installation of Variable Message Signs and a Journey Time Monitoring System within the Borough. The report identifies significant benefits arising from operating systems that are compatible with neighbouring authorities. Procurement is therefore proposed to be restricted to one supplier and the waiving of standing orders is sought.

## **2. RECOMMENDED: That:**

- 1) **Procurement Standing Orders 3.1 to 3.7 be waived to obtain equipment that is the same as neighbouring authorities to allow future joint use;**
- 2) **the quote from Siemens Traffic Controls for the supply, installation and commissioning of 6 No. Variable Message Signs (VMS) for £138,479.69 be accepted;**
- 3) **the Authority agrees to pursue joint working with the Merseyside Authorities and Highways Agency for joint use of the Variable Message signs; and**
- 4) **the quote from Siemens Traffic Controls for the supply, installation and commissioning of Journey Time Monitoring System including Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) Cameras for £43,720.00 be accepted; and**
- 5) **the Authority agrees to pursue joint working with Cheshire Constabulary for joint use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) Cameras**

## **3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 In LTP2 there is a proposal to provide Variable Message Signs (VMS) on the approaches to the Silver Jubilee Bridge, to provide information on traffic conditions and proposed works. To get the most benefit from the system it needs to be the same systems as installed in neighbouring authorities (e.g. Liverpool City Council, Warrington BC and Wirral BC). All these authorities

have recently installed systems supplied by Siemens Traffic Controls Ltd after obtaining tenders. The Liverpool system includes a sign within Halton on A562 Speke Road near Everite Road, Widnes.

- 3.2 Initially the VMS System will be only operated by Halton but by agreement, it is envisaged that it will be able to be utilised by neighbouring authorities and the Highways Agency, who will reciprocate with similar sharing arrangements for their signs. When the Silver Jubilee Bridge was recently closed, the Highways Agency through the National and Regional Traffic Control Centres displayed advance warning and details of the closure on their signs around M6/M56/M62 and we received positive comments about the information displayed. Ultimately it is planned to show the information displayed on the VMS on the website as part of supplying travel information to the public (Highways Agency already display this information on their website [www.highways.gov.uk](http://www.highways.gov.uk) ).
- 3.3 It is proposed to locate three signs on the southern approaches and three on the northern approaches, at the approximate location of the existing fixed signs. The signs would be controlled from an Instation located in Rutland House. However eventually it is envisaged there will be some automation and remote access to increase the use of them, when emergencies occur outside office hours. For planned events the system can be programmed in advance to switch the signs on/off.
- 3.4 Prices have been obtained from Siemens Traffic Controls for the supply, installation and commissioning of 6 No. Variable Message Signs (VMS) for £138,479.69. In addition we will need to arrange traffic management for their installation and the provision of a mains electrical supply to each sign.
- 3.5 Under the Traffic Management Act 2004, the Authority is required to monitor journey time information to ensure that it is able to supply information that may be requested by the Department for Transport, to prove that we are fulfilling our duties. The most effective way of monitoring journey time is to have an automated system, which generally includes Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras located at strategic points.
- 3.6 It is proposed to monitor the journey times across the bridge on the routes from Speke Road and Watkinson Way to Runcorn and vice versa. This will require the installation of ANPR Cameras at strategic points and initially about eight cameras will be needed, but this number could be reduced by joint working with Cheshire Constabulary (subject to agreement and technical details). The cameras will then feed the information back to an Instation at Rutland House where the data will be processed.
- 3.7 The data gathered by the ANPR Cameras is scrambled and therefore we are not able to identify specific vehicles. Initially the communications is recommended to be via GPRS, however this may need to be revised if the data in the future is shared with the Police (ANPR system) then a more secure method of data transfer may be required. The data will also be able to be used to support the Mersey Gateway proposal, as information will be constantly gathered about journey times across the existing bridge.

- 3.8 In the future it will be possible to gather information on journeys over a wider area as Liverpool City Council and Warrington Borough Council have recently installed systems and by using the same equipment this would be possible. The Liverpool City Council system has been supplied by Siemens Traffic Controls Ltd and currently covers the City Centre area. Siemens Traffic Controls Ltd has also supplied the Warrington Borough Council system.
- 3.9 Prices have been obtained from Siemens Traffic Controls for the supply, installation and commissioning of a Journey Time Monitoring System including 4 No. Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) Cameras for £43,720.00. In addition we will need to arrange traffic management for their installation and the provision of a mains electrical supply to each camera.
- 3.10 The two systems are first steps to comply with the requirements of the Traffic Management Act to provide information to drivers on traffic conditions and monitor traffic flows. It is likely that both systems will need to be expanded, when funding is available.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Under the Traffic Management Act there is a requirement to provide information to drivers on traffic conditions and monitor traffic flows.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

##### **5.1 Resource Implications**

Funding for the installation costs will be provided through the LTP and operational costs through the Highway Revenue Budgets.

##### **5.2 Social Inclusion Implications**

None

##### **5.3 Sustainability Checklist**

Under the Traffic Management Act there is a requirement to provide information to drivers on traffic conditions and monitor traffic flows.

##### **5.4 Legal Implications**

The data gathered by the ANPR Cameras is scrambled and therefore we are not able to identify specific vehicles, therefore there is no Data Protection issue

#### **6.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.