

LOCAL BUS SERVICES – 101/102 DUMFRIES TO EDINBURGH

1. Reason for Report

1.1 To report on the outcome of the procurement exercise by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) for the continued provision of local bus services on routes 101/102 Dumfries to Edinburgh and agree the SWestrans contribution to this cross-boundary contract.

1.2 This item is presented as an urgent item of business due to the need for a decision due to the fact that this information was not available when the papers for this meeting were published. This report should not wait till the next board due to the need for a timeous decision in this matter.

2. Background

2.1 At its meetings in March, June, September and November 2022 the Board has received updates on the work to find a sustainable and affordable replacement for the 101/102 Dumfries to Edinburgh local bus service.

2.2 The service is funding jointly by SWestrans, SPT and Scottish Borders Council with the current temporary contract, due to end on 31 March 2023, costing £507,940 per year with contributions split equally across the 3 funding partners at £169,313 per year. It provides 4 Monday to Saturday return trips per day from Dumfries to Edinburgh and 2 return trips on Sunday as well as an additional 8 Monday to Saturday returns from Biggar to Edinburgh and 2 on a Sunday.

3. Key Issues – Procurement

3.1 As advised to the Board at its meeting in September 2022, SPT agreed to be the lead authority in the procurement of the service with tenders seeking a replacement, at a similar level to that currently provided, for a 5-year period from March 2023.

3.2 Six tender options, each requiring a price to be submitted on minimum subsidy and gross cost basis, were issued. The options are briefly summarised below:

- 1 - Dumfries to Edinburgh (4 Mon to Sun returns)
- 2 - Biggar to Edinburgh (6 Mon to Sat returns)
- 3 - Dumfries to Biggar (5 Mon to Sat returns/4 Sun returns)
- 4 - Biggar to Edinburgh (10 Mon to Sat returns/4 Sun returns)
- 5 - Crawford/Abington/Biggar to Edinburgh (13 Mon to Sat returns/4 Sun returns)
- 6 - Moffat/Biggar to Edinburgh (12 Mon to Sat returns/4 Sun returns)

3.3 As advised in a parallel report to this meeting (report 7 Local Bus Update), following a detailed analysis of the various bids received, it had been determined that unfortunately none of these offerings represented best value, and therefore could not be recommended for award. Therefore, further procurement activity was required with the aim of securing a financially sustainable solution before the end of March

2023. To this end, SPT would engage with operators, (including those operators who submitted tenders) to find a sustainable and affordable solution that will maintain links on the route between Dumfries and Edinburgh, via Biggar, when the current temporary contract expires.

3.4 This exercise concluded week commencing 23 January 2023 with SPT advising that a bid of £385,000 per year from Houstons Coaches had been received to operate a 3 year contract (with 2 year optional extension) for timetable options 1 and 2 as indicated in paragraph 3.2. This will provide the same level of service from Dumfries to Edinburgh.

3.5 SPT's Operations Committee on 27 January 2023 will be receiving a report on this outcome with the report recommending award of a contract for 101/102 Dumfries to Edinburgh to Houstons Coaches at £385,000 per year subject to SWestrans and Scottish Borders Council agreeing their funding contributions. It is intended that funding will be split equally across the 3 funding partners at £128,333 per year.

3.6 As discussed in the parallel report to this meeting, the replacement of this route sits out with the timeline of the other supported local bus services. Therefore, the conclusion of this tender process and award of contract allows certainty on the funding available for the full network replacement across the region in August 2023.

3.7 Members of the Board are asked to agree the contribution of £128,333 per year to SPT for local bus service 101/102 Dumfries to Edinburgh.

4. Implications	
Financial	The financial implications are indicated in the report.
Policy	SWestrans has a statutory duty to determine the policy and provision of socially necessary bus services within the budget it has available.
Equalities	<p>Older people would be disproportionately affected by reductions in services. At a minimum, services would be reduced for personal activity and retail, removing non-peak journeys. Older people tend to use these services, and many rely on the national concessionary fare scheme for their travel.</p> <p>Disabled people who rely on public transport for their travel needs would face an increased lack of accessibility.</p> <p>Our own research shows that women are more reliant on public transport than men and have lower levels of access to private vehicles. Pregnant women and mothers of younger children also tend to rely more heavily on public transport for accessing health and retail, and other facilities.</p> <p>Service reduction will have a potential impact on the mental and physical health of residents who will suffer</p>

	<p>reduced access to facilities.</p> <p>Service reduction will impact those in more isolated areas who cannot access alternative transport.</p> <p>Research indicates that those members of society on lower income rely heavily on public transport for access to all essential services; any reduction in provision could result in increased hardship and greater inequality.</p>
Climate Change	Bus service provision can have a positive impact on climate change objectives by reducing emissions associated with car usage.
Risk Management	Local bus provision relates to the known risks: R02 – Public Image R05 – RTS Delivery R07 – Revenue Funding R08 – Bus Contracts Prices R13 – Lack of Bus Operators and Drivers

5. Consultations

The Proper Officer (Finance) has been consulted and is in agreement with the terms of the report.

6. Recommendation

Members of the Board are asked to agree the contribution of £128,333 per year to SPT for local bus service 101/102 Dumfries to Edinburgh.

<p>Douglas Kirkpatrick – Report Author Tel:01387 260136</p> <p>Date of Report: 24 January 2023 File Ref: SW2/meetings/2023</p>	<p>Approved by: Douglas Kirkpatrick Lead Officer South West of Scotland Transport Partnership Cargen Tower Garroch Business Park Dumfries DG2 8PN</p>
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