

Report to Director of Highways, Transport and Planning

October 2020

Award of Contract: Real Time Passenger Information

Report by Head of Transport and Network Operations

Electoral division(s): All

Summary

A Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system, broadly defined, means any information available about the current status of buses, including latest known locations and predicted arrival times at bus stops.

The current contract to purchase, maintain and operate infrastructure to display RTPI was let in 2016 and will expire on 30 November 2020. There are no further extensions to that contract available.

Following a review of options, it is proposed that the County Council accesses a Framework Agreement established by Hampshire County Council (HCC) in order to ensure that the ongoing purchase and maintenance of both existing and new equipment is both possible and compliant.

Recommendations

That the Director of Highways, Transport and Planning approves:

- (1) access to Hampshire County Council's Framework Agreement for the provision of the supply, installation, commissioning and maintenance of the Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system; and
- (2) the award of contract to VIX Technology Limited to purchase, install and maintain infrastructure associated with the RTPI system starting on 1 December 2020 for 5 years as set out in section 2.7 of the report.

Proposal

1 Background and context

- 1.1 The current contract for the operation and maintenance of the Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system is with VIX Technology Ltd and expires on 30 November 2020. There are no further contract extensions available.
- 1.2 The current contract covers:
 - a. the operation and maintenance of the central control system;
 - b. maintenance of RTPI displays at bus stops (and other off-street locations) and;

c. the supply and installation of new displays

- 1.3 RTPI displays were first installed in West Sussex in 2006. There are currently 308 displays across the county, providing waiting passengers with information on bus services operated by five bus operators.
- 1.4 The RTPI system is a well-established means of providing information on bus departure times to the travelling public, via displays at bus stops and also on a dedicated website. The displays also provide assistance to visually impaired passengers via an audio announcement facility.
- 1.5 The RTPI displays provide a vital role in encouraging people to use buses and will provide an on-going role in supporting bus operators and passengers over the coming years. For example, during the Covid-19 lockdown, the displays have provided up-to-date information on the reduced bus services and community messages.
- 1.6 Therefore it is essential that a new contract is in place to ensure that the system is maintained and supported.
- 1.7 An assessment of available routes to market has been undertaken, including the option to access existing contracts let by neighbouring authorities.
- 1.8 Total spend during the financial year 2019/20 for maintenance (central control system and existing signs) and the purchase of new displays was approximately £170,000.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 It is proposed that the County Council accesses Hampshire County Council's RTPI Framework Agreement ("Framework Agreement"). This is a single supplier Framework Agreement that HCC awarded to VIX Technology Ltd.
- 2.2 The Framework Agreement, which is available to a number of named local authorities including the County Council, has been procured lawfully in compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015.
- 2.3 The Framework Agreement allows the County Council to lawfully procure by means of a direct award of a contract to VIX Technology Ltd.
- 2.4 The Framework Agreement is divided into two main services – (a) maintenance (central control system and displays) and (b) provision of new displays.
- 2.5 Under the Framework Agreement, the provision of new displays will end in August 2021, at which time HCC will re-procure that aspect of the Framework Agreement.
- 2.6 The County Council will work with HCC on the procurement of the new Framework Agreement. The existing displays operate on proprietary technology (by VIX Technology Ltd) and any new incoming supplier would be required to update all the displays.
- 2.7 The maintenance of the central control system and displays can continue until August 2027. However, it is proposed that a contract for 5 years (until November 2025) is awarded. This would cover the maintenance of the existing infrastructure as well as any new displays purchased up until August 2021.

2.8 The Framework Agreement also allows for the County Council's RTPI central control system to be merged with the HCC central control system (instead of VIX Technology maintaining two separate systems, they will operate one system covering both authorities). This will avoid unnecessary duplication of services as well as achieve cost savings, without disrupting service continuity.

3 Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

3.1 An options appraisal has been completed. The options considered were:

- a. Do nothing
- b. Access the existing Hampshire County Council RTPI Framework Agreement but don't combine the central control system
- c. Access the existing Hampshire County Council RTPI Framework Agreement and combine the central control system
- d. Access the East Sussex County Council RTPI Contract
- e. Re-procure a new contract for WSCC only

3.2 If no contract is in place, the existing RTPI equipment wouldn't be maintained and would ultimately lead to blank displays and the discontinuation of the RTPI system. The removal of failed equipment would require extra revenue.

3.3 The existing RTPI system has become a well-established and relied upon source of information for bus passengers, bus operators and other parties who disseminate the RTPI information. It would be difficult and expensive to recreate the current system in future years.

3.4 The existing displays operate on proprietary technology (by VIX Technology Ltd) and any new incoming supplier would be required to update all the displays. Any incoming supplier would be required to update the displays to their own system technology at a cost to the County Council. For example, under the East Sussex County Council contract (see 3.7 below), the cost of updating the existing displays is £750 per display.

3.5 The sole supplier for the HCC Framework Agreement is VIX Technology Ltd so there would be a consistent, known supplier.

3.6 Using the existing Hampshire County Council Framework Agreement would allow the County Council to maintain all the existing displays for 5 years at a reduced cost but also have the flexibility of reviewing the purchase of new displays in 12 months' time. At that time the County Council can either use the new HCC Framework Agreement or carry out its own tendering process during 2021.

3.7 The East Sussex County Council contract was awarded to a different company, 21st Century Passenger Systems Ltd and would require all of the displays to be changed at a cost of over £230,000.

3.8 The on-going maintenance of the displays would also be slightly more expensive under the East Sussex County Council contract and wouldn't offer any significant savings.

4 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1 The County Council's internal Procurement Board has considered the options and supports the proposed procurement and contract award process, which will be undertaken in accordance with the County Council's Standing Orders on Procurement and Contracts.
- 4.2 Legal Services have reviewed the Hampshire County Council RTPI Framework Agreement and are satisfied that the terms and conditions are compliant with Standing Orders.
- 4.3 The Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure was briefed and consulted in June 2020.
- 4.4 As the contractual changes do not directly affect members of the travelling public, there is no requirement to consult with the general public, borough, district, town or parish councils.
- 4.5 Bus operators have been kept informed of the proposed arrangements. This decision will not affect the operational running of the displays and bus operators will see no changes to their ability to supply the system with information relevant to their operation.

5 Finance

- 5.1 The estimated value of the 5 year contract is £851,000. This is broken down into approximately £425,000 for maintenance (over the 5 years) and approximately £426,000 for the purchase of new displays over the next 1-2 years.
- 5.2 The maintenance of the central control system and displays is funded from existing revenue works budgets.
- 5.3 Under the Framework Agreement, a number of maintenance savings can be met over the next 5 years. The projected revenue savings over the 5 years is a minimum of £200,000. There will also be additional savings on the maintenance cost of new displays that come into maintenance under the new contract (i.e. from 1 December 2020).
- 5.4 The revenue savings are shown in the below table

	Current Year 2020/21 £k		Year 2 2021/22 £k	Year 3 2022/23 £k	Year 4 2023/24 £k	Year 5 2024/25 £k
	Existing contract 1 April 2020 to 30 Nov 2020	New contract 1 Dec 2020 to 31 Mar 2021				
Revenue budget	145		145	145	145	145

Central control system costs	34	37	18	18	18	18
Maintenance of existing displays	64	20	59	59	59	59
Maintenance of new displays (starts 1 year after installation)	0	0	4	16	20	20
Overspend / Saving	-10 Overspend		64 Saving	52 Saving	48 Saving	48 Saving

- 5.5 In the current year (2020/21) the 'Central control system costs' includes an additional one-off, set-up cost of £31,000 (see section 5.7 below) together with savings of £10,000 on the maintenance of the existing display under the new contract from 1 December 2020 to 31 March 2021. This additional in year cost has already been reported during monthly budget reviews.
- 5.6 Each new RTPI display comes with a 1 year warranty, so new displays purchased in the current year will come into maintenance during Year 2 and so on. The maintenance cost of these new displays (at the reduced price – see section 5.8 below) has been included in the above table, based on estimated install and maintenance start dates.
- 5.7 It is proposed that the current West Sussex central control system will merge with the Hampshire central control system resulting in a saving of £34,000 per year in the costs associated with the central control system in years 2 to 5. In the current year (2020/21) there will be an additional cost of £31,000 as a one-off set-up/migration fee to join the HCC system.
- 5.8 Under the HCC Framework Agreement, the maintenance costs per displays are 17-19% cheaper (depending on the display type) therefore saving approximately £27,000 per year.
- 5.9 The purchase of new displays is funded mainly from s106/CIL contributions with some end of life replacements funded from capital.
- 5.10 There are a number of RTPI projects programmed for delivery this financial year (under the existing contract) and some that are programmed for delivery under the new contract from 1 December 2020 until August 2021.
- 5.11 The programmed delivery is shown in the below table:

	Current Year 2020/21 £k	Year 2 2021/22 £k
Capital budget	110	0
S106 budget	211	81
CIL budget	60	60

	Current Year 2020/21 £k	Year 2 2021/22 £k
LEP	0	285
TOTAL	381	426

- 5.12 It is likely that further funding (capital, s106 or CIL) will be available for the installation of additional RTPI displays in future years.
- 5.13 There is no impact on Human Resources. As with the existing contract, the proposed contract will be managed by the Intelligent Transport Lead, Transport & Network Operations, Highways Transport and Planning Directorate.
- 5.14 There is no impact on IT. Under both the existing and proposed contract, the central control systems are hosted externally, with various software being accessed via internet browsers.

6 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Contract transition results in decline in service levels	The existing infrastructure was supplied and installed by VIX Technology Limited who will continue to supply services/hardware under the new contract.
Poor quality information provided to displays / passengers	The same technology will be used to supply displays with up-to-date passenger information. There is no change or 'learning curve' associated with the proposed contract.

7 Policy alignment and other matters taken into account

- 7.1 The proposal supports the prosperous place priority in the West Sussex Plan. The RTPI displays help promote the use of the public transport and increased bus patronage.
- 7.2 The RTPI displays have an audio announcement facility that allows those carrying a small key fob to activate audio announcements through speakers at the bottom of the displays. Therefore the displays do not discriminate against people with visual and hearing impairments or learning difficulties and disabilities.
- 7.3 The audio announcement facility assists people with sight or hearing impairments or learning difficulties and disabilities to gain confidence and independence in using the bus as a means of travel.
- 7.4 The RTPI System therefore has an impact on anyone travelling by bus, particularly those that use buses as their primary means of travel.
- 7.5 The proposal has no implications under the Human Rights Act 1998.
- 7.6 There are no foreseeable crime and disorder implications to this proposal.

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Appendices None

Background papers None