

## 12. FREE CENTRAL CITY SHUTTLE SERVICE REVIEW

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The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the need to review the free central city shuttle service, and to outline the proposed process to undertake this review.

### BACKGROUND

The Shuttle is a free central city bus operation funded by the Council and operated by Redbus Ltd since 1 December 1998, initially under a five year contract. This contract was extended by one year in March 2001, bringing the expiry date of the contract to 30 November 2004. This service should be reviewed prior to any re-tendering.

This report outlines a process to review all aspects of shuttle operation, the purpose of which will be to identify options for any new opportunities or areas for improvement, which can be incorporated into a new contract that must be ready to commence from 1 December 2004, if the shuttle is to continue.

The shuttle has been an extremely popular and successful service, and has become synonymous with the Garden City image, particularly in the view of visitors to the city. Passenger numbers to the end of February 2004 reached over 5.3 million, with on average over 85,000 passengers carried each month. The cost to Council of this service contract since commencing is approximately \$685,000 per annum. This does not include costs associated with the maintenance and renewal of shuttle stop infrastructure. The shuttle makes 37,613 trips annually.

### NEED FOR SERVICE REVIEW

Whilst the good working and contractual relationship between the Council and Redbus Ltd has ensured the operation of the service has remained at a high standard, no formal service review has been undertaken since the start of the service in December 1998. Contractual changes that have taken place since 1998 have, however, brought about improvements such as the introduction of the fourth vehicle in mid 2001 and the move to LPG/electric power units in mid 2000, providing improved passenger carrying capacity and emission standards.

There are advantages of undertaking a review at this time, rather than simply extending the existing contract at a later date. Over the life of the shuttle there have been many suggestions received regarding modifications to the shuttle operation. The review will enable a top to bottom assessment of all aspects of the service, identifying areas for potential improvement, and any new opportunities that can be addressed in time for the new contract. However, it should be noted that current budgets allow for the continuation of the current service (or similar service of equal value), and additions to the service would probably require additional funding which if necessary could be introduced through an amendment to the LTCCP, which would occur in association with the 2005/06 Annual Plan process.

### PROPOSED REVIEW PROCESS

It is proposed that the review be undertaken in four stages.

#### Define Problems and Objectives

The first stage will involve collecting all relevant information relating to the shuttle service. This will comprise passenger boarding and alighting counts at shuttle stops, assessing infrastructure standard and quality, vehicle performance and reliability, route performance (ability to meet and suitability of the timetable), user surveys, stakeholder feedback, financial costs and route suitability. Timeline: March and April 2004.

#### Identify All Reasonably Practicable Options

The second stage will involve reviewing the data that has been gathered and identifying options to improve the service. The outcome of this stage may suggest infrastructure improvements, route changes, vehicle technology changes or perhaps even the viability of introducing a new route. The options can be developed and judged against requirements in terms of costs to the Council and the wider benefits to the city in terms of environmental, economic, social and cultural outcomes, for example. It is proposed that the Committee adopt the options for further consultation in stage three. Timeline: May 2004.

## **Assess and Develop Options**

The third stage should be to test proposals among stakeholders and the community, and in so doing consider the views and preferences of people likely to be effected or to have an interest. This will provide confidence in the viability of the proposals and guide final option approval and budget provision. Timeline: June to mid July 2004.

## **Adoption**

The final stage, including a seminar for this Committee, allows any changes that are required to be adopted and incorporated within a new contract, tendered and awarded in time for operation from 1 December 2004. Timeline: mid July to end of September 2004.

## **CONCLUSION**

The free central city shuttle service contract expires on 30 November 2004. This report recommends a timely review of all aspects of the service, in order to ensure the shuttle continues to provide a high quality service to its current and future users, at best value to the Council and the city. This review process should start now in order to ensure an appropriate contract is in operation from 1 December 2004.

## **Staff**

- Recommendation:**
1. That the review process as outlined above be supported.
  2. That staff report back findings and recommendations upon completion of stage two (option identification and assessment).
  3. That staff report back on findings and recommendations at stage four, addressing in particular the renewal of the current contract, and any new 'services' or service modifications proposals for introduction in the 2005/06 financial year.

## **Chairman's**

- Recommendation:** That the above recommendation be adopted.