

Cabinet – 18 April 2007

Route 51 Bus Showcase and A34 Red Route Tender Assessment and Approval

Portfolio: Councillor R Walker – Environment and Street Pride

Service Area(s): Engineering and Transportation

Wards: St Matthews, Paddock

Forward Plan: Yes

Summary of Report

This report seeks approval for the Council to tender to appoint a contractor to construct Phase 2 of the Route 51 Bus Showcase and A34 Red Route scheme for the Birmingham Road Corridor. The scheme proposals for the Birmingham Road Corridor were approved by Cabinet in July 2005, following that approval proposals have been progressed to construction stage. This report also seeks approval to delegate authority for the appointment of a contractor to the Executive Director, Neighbourhoods, following receipt of tenders.

Recommendations

- (1) To approve tendering for the appointment of a contractor in accordance with the Council's Financial and Contract Rules, to undertake the construction of the Bus Showcase and Red Route proposals for the Birmingham Road Corridor.
- (2) To delegate authority for the acceptance of tenders and award of contract to the Executive Director for Neighbourhoods, following an assessment of received tenders for Value for Money and quality.

Resource and Legal Considerations

In July 2005 Cabinet approved the implementation of joint Bus Showcase and Red Route measures along the Birmingham Rd section of the A34. Red Routes are designed to improve traffic flow and reliability and reduce road accidents, whilst bus showcase proposals are aimed at improving bus reliability and journey experience.

Red Routes elements of the scheme are to be funded from the £5.6m allocation the Council was awarded in December 2004, as part of a wider funding approval of £28m for the West Midlands, to implement the first phase of a regional Red Route network. The Bus Showcase element of the funding was approved by West Midlands Chief Engineers and Planning Officers' Group (CEPOG) in December 2005, for a total of £2.57m for the Walsall section of the route.

The total funding for the implementation of the works is £3.62m. Phase 1 of the works (Bell Rd/ Walstead Rd junction and advanced bus stop upgrades) is due to complete in April 2007. Subject to the confirmation of out-turn costs for Phase 1, it is currently forecast that there will be a budget of £1.7m available for the completion of Phase 2 of the works. The current estimate for the cost of Phase 2 is £1.3m plus statutory undertaker diversion costs.

The final estimated costs for the scheme will be determined following the receipt of tenders and identification of a preferred contractor. If at this stage it is determined that the scheme is expected to cost more than the current available budget, further funding approvals will be sought from the Bus Showcase and Red Route programmes prior to the appointment of a contractor.

A total of six companies will be invited to tender for the work; these will be selected from the Council's standing list and will include at least one company that is randomly selected. To ensure that the Council continues to deliver the scheme on programme, Cabinet is asked to delegate authority for the acceptance of tenders and award of contract to the Executive Director.

Citizen Impact

Investment in new transport facilities and the improvement of the existing network and management of traffic has a bearing on the well-being and satisfaction of all citizens in the Borough. In delivering the scheme the Council will ensure that the appointed contractor undertakes a pro-active approach to communications with residents and road users along the length of the works. The contractor will also be restricted in when they can undertake works to minimise disruption to traffic at busy periods.

Community Safety

All of the proposed works will be undertaken in accordance with Health and Safety and new Construction (Design and Management) legislation which comes into effect from April 2007. All tenderers will be required to demonstrate a strong track record in abiding by all appropriate health and safety requirements. The tenderers will all be required to demonstrate they have public liability and professional indemnity insurance to the levels required by the Council's Financial and Contract Rules.

The scheme designs have been subject to all required stages of a Road Safety Audit and will be audited on site to ensure they operate safely following completion of the scheme.

Environmental Impact

The proposals have been developed in conjunction with similar proposals along the A34 in Birmingham and Sandwell to deliver reduced journey times and improved journey time reliability for general traffic and public transport. By providing greater control of traffic flow along the route, it is expected that air quality at peak periods will also be improved. The proposals have been developed not only based on existing traffic flows, but forecast traffic growth to 2015, which is likely to see an increase in traffic volumes of more than 20% on existing levels.

The proposals involve the removal of twelve highway trees on the southern side of Birmingham Road on the dual carriageway section (closest to the Aston University sports fields) and within the central reservation. Many of these trees are in a poor state of health and would require removal regardless of the implementation of these proposals. It is intended to provide replacement trees, at a ratio of 3 semi-mature trees for every mature tree removed. The replacement trees will be planted on University land along the boundary with Birmingham Road and in the central reservation to ensure that the tree lined approach is maintained. The tree planting and landscaping proposals have been developed conjointly with Sandwell to ensure a consistent landscaping design along this important section of the A34. Work at detailed design stage has sought to minimise the number of trees impacted. The trees on the northern side of the dual carriageway and in the central reservation along the dual carriageway section will remain.

Performance and Risk Management Issues

The assessment of received tenders will include items relevant to quality and Value for Money; it is intended that quality items will comprise 60% of the total marks available and Value for Money will comprise 40%. The tendering exercise, award of contract and contract administration will be done in accordance with the Council's Financial and Contract Rules to minimise risk to the Council.

Through the design and development of the scheme, a risk register has been developed which identifies all risks to the project, their likelihood and impact and mitigating measures where appropriate. The contractor will be required to operate within the requirements of all appropriate Health and Safety and Construction (Design and Management) legislation. The appointed contractor will be required to submit programmes, method statements and appropriate notifications outlining how they intend to manage and implement critical elements of the construction work.

The implementation of this scheme is key to the Council continuing to deliver the key objectives and targets of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan of improving public transport and managing congestion.

Equality Implications

As part of the tendering exercise, the contractors will be required to demonstrate compliance with the Council's Equalities policies. Any tender found not to be compliant with the Council's Equalities requirements will be rejected.

Consultation

The scheme proposals were subject to wide spread consultation in 2005, the results of this were reported to Cabinet when the scheme was approved for implementation in July 2005. In undertaking the implementation works the Council and the appointed contractor will engage in a pro-active communications strategy to inform residents, public transport operators and users, drivers and other road users, and key stakeholders (e.g. Centro, Highways Agency) of the works and impacts or disruption that the works may cause. Emergency contact and information management

procedures will be adopted to ensure that all issues or concerns raised can be managed in an efficient and comprehensive manner.

Vision 2008

Delivery of Walsall's Red Route and Bus Showcase programmes form a key part of the Council's LTP2 programme which supports all elements of the Council's Vision, in particular making it easier to get around.

Background Papers

Cabinet Report and Resolution – July 2005 – Approval to A34 Red Route and Route 51 Bus Showcase Proposals.

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Jamie Morris
Executive Director

3 April 2007



Councillor Rachel Walker
Portfolio holder

3 April 2007