

**Proposed Decision to be taken by the
Deputy Leader
on or after 24 October 2014**

**Soft Market Testing to Establish the Viability of
Franchising the Bishopton Park & Ride and Parkway
Car Park Site.**

Recommendation

That the Deputy Leader gives approval for Soft Market Testing to be undertaken in order to assess the viability of franchising the Bishopton site, including the management and operation of the Stratford Park & Ride and Stratford Parkway car park site.

1.0 Key Issues

- 1.1 Stratford Park & Ride and Stratford Parkway are co-located on the site at Bishopton, north of Stratford-upon-Avon. The Park & Ride service opened in 2005 and provides a high quality service with free parking and a frequent bus service into the town centre. Stratford Parkway station, which was funded by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, opened to the public in May 2013 and provides an improved rail service to Birmingham. Car parking for rail users is available in a dedicated car park on a pay and display basis.
- 1.2 To enable the Park & Ride service to operate successfully, Warwickshire County Council currently subsidises the service. As part of the financial saving measures identified in 2013, the Park & Ride will be subject to a much reduced budget from April 2015. Whilst a number of improvements and initiatives have already been and will continue to be, implemented, the County Council is examining the viability of a number of options to improve the efficiency and attractiveness of the overall site in order to enable the continued operation of the Park & Ride service in the future.

2.0 Options and Proposal

- 2.1 In order to maximise the efficiency of the Bishopton site, Warwickshire County Council is considering a number of options in relation to the operation and management of the site, to include the continued operation of the Park & Ride facility and Parkway Station car park. These are set out in table 2.0 below;

Table 2.0 Options for the Future Operation of the Bishopton Site

	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
Option	Continued Operation of Site and P&R Operation	Enhanced Existing Site and P&R Operation	Franchise Site and P&R Operation to External Operator	Sell the P&R element of the site and Cease P&R Operation
Description	Continued implementation of improvements and savings already identified.	Enhance strategy and revised operation with the aim of reducing WCC subsidy.	Site and P&R operated by external operator.	Sell the site to bidder and cease operation of P&R services.
Operator	Remain under WCC operation.	Remain under WCC operation.	External operator.	External operator/owner.
Financial	Does not achieve required WCC budgetary savings.	Reduced subsidy Achieves WCC budgetary savings.	WCC benefit from a reduced fixed or no subsidy requirement thereby achieving budgetary requirements.	WCC receive capital receipt and save ongoing requirement for subsidy.

- 2.2 All four of the options outlined in table 2.0 above will be subject to an appraisal process which will be based on cost, practicalities and risk. In relation to Option C, to ascertain the level and type of interest the market may have in the site, the County Council wishes to carry out Soft Market Testing.
- 2.3 Soft Market Testing will allow the County Council to explore potential possibilities in relation to the future development, management and operation of the Bishopton site and to gain an understanding of the type of proposals the market may be interested in pursuing, if and when the final procurement is undertaken. This will help ensure the County Council has sufficient preliminary information, including financial information, in relation to Option C to carry out the appraisal process.
- 2.4 The opportunity to participate in the Soft Market Testing will be advertised on the Warwickshire County Council website and all interested parties will be encouraged to respond.

3.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 3.1 It is proposed that Soft Market Testing in relation to option C is completed by December 2014. A full appraisal of all the options identified will be completed by Spring 2015 and a report produced to recommend which Option the County Council should proceed with. It is anticipated that any changes to how the site is operated and managed will be implemented by April 2016. Any decision regarding the future of the overall site including the operation and management of existing facilities is subject to Cabinet approval.
- 3.2 The cost of the soft market testing and options appraisal will be funded from within the existing 2014/15 Transport and Highways business unit revenue budget.

Background papers

1. Atkins Technical Paper: Stage 1

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