



LEWIS AND HARRIS BUS CONTRACTS 2026 UPDATE

Report by Chief Officer, Assets and Infrastructure

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to provide an update on the timeline for the tendering for the Lewis and Harris Bus Contracts which are due to be in place for October 2026.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The current contracts covering the Lewis and Harris school and public bus services were for seven years and are due to end on 13 October 2026. There is a lot of preparatory work for the next round of tenders and this Report outlines the proposed timeline for the procurement and tendering process for ensuring that new contracts are in place for October 2026.
- 2.2 The 2025/26 Budget for the Lewis and Harris bus contracts is circa £4.2 million and the procurement process will be planned around this figure considering any annual inflationary increases. It is accepted that budgets may be reviewed as part of the 2026/27 budget setting, and this will be considered as part of the process.
- 2.3 An Officer Transport Working Group including staff from Transport, Education, Legal and Finance will be established; however, there would be benefit in having a short-term Member Officer Working Group to facilitate discussion and support elected member input into key stages and considerations of the design process.

RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Comhairle agrees to:
- a) note the key deadlines and proposed programme for the tendering exercise for the Lewis and Harris School and Public Bus Contracts due in October 2026; and
 - b) establish a short-term Member Officer Working Group to consider the key stages and design process for Lewis and Harris Bus Contracts.

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Appendices: None
Background Papers: None

IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

| Resource Implications | Implications/None |
|------------------------|---|
| Financial | None at this stage however there will be implications as the process moves forward and |
| Legal | None at this stage. |
| Staffing | There will be staffing resource from the services mentioned at 2.3 and this will be significant at peak times of the process. |
| Assets and Property | None |
| | |
| Strategic Implications | Implications/None |
| Risk | Access to mainland service requires transport by ferry. |
| Equalities | None |
| Corporate Strategy | None |
| Environmental Impact | Reduction in waste to landfill |
| Consultation | None |

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The current contracts covering the Lewis and Harris school and public bus services were for seven years and are due to end on 13 October 2026. There is a lot of preparatory work for the next round of tenders and this Report outlines the proposed timeline for the procurement and tendering process for ensuring that new contracts are in place for October 2026.

Key Deadlines and Proposed Programme

- 6.1 The following are the key deadlines and proposed programme:

| Programme | Timeline (latest) |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Continue current passenger data analysis for all Lewis and Harris services. Identify areas of concern and consult with current operators on information gathered. | August 2025 |
| Assemble a Transport Working Group (TWG) including staff from Transport, Education, Legal and Finance | August 2025 |
| TWG & MOWG meet to discuss and feed into key stages and considerations of the process. | August-November 2025 |
| Consultation exercise with customers and stakeholders | August/September 2025 |
| Report to Committees November 2025. Outline tender programme options and contract duration choices. Before agenda deadline. | 3 November 2025 |
| Develop Contract Specification for all agreed options. With the exception of Home to School Transport. Develop a priority list for service delivery. | November 2025-February 2026 |
| Review Contract Specifications in light of budget setting process. | February 2026 |
| Final Reports to Committees. Final proposals, options and progress. | ~March 2026 |
| Publish completed Invitation to tender (ITT) contract documentation on public contract Scotland (PCS) (~4 weeks) | ~April/May 2026 |
| Tenders returned and evaluated | May/June 2026 |
| Contracts awarded 4 months prior to Start date | 12 June 2026 |
| New Contracts Start | 14 October 2026 |