

## REPORT OF COMMERCIAL SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

(Meeting held on 3 March 2005)

### 1. DIRECTORS REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL TO 31 DECEMBER 2004

#### (a) Financial Position

The overall financial position for the first quarter of the year showed both New Forest and Test Valley elements of the partnership operating at a surplus (NF £190,000, TV £164,000).

NF

All sections were performing well and have either achieved a break even or surplus position. Of particular note was the surplus returned on grounds maintenance works of £63,000 achieved as a result of savings on salary, wages and transport costs. The Engineering Works team had also achieved a surplus of £78,000 generated across the whole range of services provided by the section.

TV

The Test Valley sections were also performing well with significant savings on the Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing employee budgets of £123,000 and strong performance from the Grounds Maintenance team (£47,000 surplus).

#### (b) Operational Issues

Good progress has been made in the search for an alternative site for the refuse fleet located at Bunny Lane. An alternative site, in the Romsey area, has been identified and negotiations are now underway with the owners to agree acceptable terms and conditions for the lease.

New regulations relating to Hand/Arm Vibration (HAV) come into force in June 2005. Employers have a responsibility to test all machinery and plant that gives rise to HAV and to put in place procedures to minimise the risk to employees. This is a major task. Testing of 350 pieces of plant and machinery has been undertaken. Equipment will be 'tagged' with vibration ratings and formal safe operating procedures will be implemented for all users.

The Directorates Service Plan for 2005/6 was also presented to the joint committee. Subject to a few amendments and additions the Plan was approved by Members.

Winter maintenance (salting of the highway) had now commenced under the partnering contract with Raynesway Construction (RCS). These works are provided on a 24/7 response basis and operate from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> March each year.

Arrangements were well underway for the recruitment of 6 Gas Servicing Engineers, a supervisor and clerical assistant in preparation for a start date of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005 to undertake gas servicing work to the whole of the Council's

housing stock. The section is working closely with CORGI to achieve full registration and to ensure that robust procedures are implemented.

A successful assessment visit and technical examination had been received from the NICEIC (Domestic Installers Scheme) to qualify the Building Works electrical team under the new Part P electrical regulations for domestic properties which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005.

Work has commenced on the creation of an approved list of sub-contractors for use specifically by the Building Works section. The list, which will come into operation from May 2005, will cover all trades not employed in-house and will ensure a consistent and transparent approach to the appointment of competent contractors.

Approval was received for the recruitment to 2 new painting posts within the TV Building Works section. Funding for these posts would be achieved through a reduction in the use of sub-contractors previously engaged to undertake this work.

The reduction in the cleaning budget for Beech Hurst and Duttons Road offices would result in the loss of 5 cleaning posts. Members were informed that the reduction would result in lower cleaning frequencies and therefore standards to some areas of the buildings. Importantly public areas, toilets and kitchen areas would receive priority within the resources available.

The creation of 2 new posts in the TV Grounds Maintenance section was also approved. The new posts will be used to directly maintain the grass cutting operations in the Cemeteries and the urban flail works which are currently undertaken by sub-contractors.

A tender for Testway Housing grass cutting in Andover was being prepared. The tender was for work already undertaken by the Grounds Maintenance section and would be submitted in accordance with the scheme of delegations recently approved for Officers and the Joint Committee.

A review of sub-contracted Grounds Maintenance work at NF had resulted in a realignment of work undertaken by the in-house team and the existing sub-contractor. Designed to improve efficiencies, the reduction of £35,000 of work awarded to the sub-contractor would require the recruitment of 2 new in-house grounds maintenance operatives. The new working arrangements will provide customers with a seamless approach to grass cutting undertaken by NFDC. The proposals were supported by Members.

Members were informed that preparations for the new NF Garden Waste Scheme was progressing well. Letters inviting residents to join the scheme have been delivered to 20,000 properties. A number of promotional press releases were programmed for February with an official launch due to take place in March.

Results were awaited from the review of TV waste collection system. Officers were working closely with the consultant and colleagues in environment and Health.

Members were informed of the creation of a TV 'Clean Team', launched in January 2005 on a multi-agency clean up of the Anton Lakes nature reserve in Andover. The 'Clean Team' is a joint initiative between Environment &

Health and Waste Services. The team is managed within the Waste Services section, with work generated by Environment & Health officers.

A range of joint procurement activity was being arranged by the NF Central Purchasing unit, namely:

- TV Commercial Services sections placing orders for goods and materials direct with NF suppliers rather than ordering goods through the Central Purchasing or Stores section. These purchases mainly cover Personal Protective Clothing and will provide a quicker a more efficient way of working.
- Setting up contracts with local builders merchants currently used by TV Building Works section on the same terms and conditions as those currently enjoyed by the NF Building Works team. By piggy backing the NF contracts it is anticipated that savings will accrue to the service as well as bringing some consistency to the purchasing process.
- Joint procurement for the supply of fuels for both Councils vehicle fleets and the supply of energy (gas/electricity) to Council premises. It is hoped that through the consolidation of usage savings will accrue to both Councils

**Cllr D Busk**

**Chairman**