

## **REPORT OF COMMERCIAL SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE**

**(Meeting held on 1 March 2007)**

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Arnell

### **2. MINUTES**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2006 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **3. DIRECTORS REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>st</sup> APRIL 2006 TO 31<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 2006**

Consideration was given to the Director's Report which covered the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2006.

#### **(a) Financial Position**

Financial information for the period was presented under Section 2 of the report and included a summary of income and expenditure by section, with variations of actual income and expenditure shown against profiled budgets, accompanying notes and accounts and outstanding debtor accounts.

The New Forest District Council (NFDC) accounts showed an under spend of £56,000 as at the end December 2006 against a projected net budget of £8m. The Building Works section had shown an overspend through to December but had improved to break even point in January as expected.

Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) accounts to the end December 2006 showed a £199,000 surplus against a projected surplus for the period of £157,000. Most units were working well.

#### **(b) Operational Issues**

Reports for the operational sections (Section 3) focused on key activities that had been undertaken during the last quarter, achievements against agreed key performance indicators and progress on service objectives identified in the Service Plan for 2006/07. Progress against the 2006/07 Service Improvement Plan was also included.

The Committee were updated and discussed the following key issues:

- A county wide scheme for the removal of abandoned vehicles was being investigated. This should have a financial benefit for any Local Authorities taking part.
- £23,000 of the £26,000 profile budget for NF street naming and numbering had been spent. This was for repair and maintenance of name plates throughout the district.
- The TVBC Refuse Collection unit was beginning to show savings from the ABC scheme. Accounts showed a £73,000 under spend to end December 2006.
- The revenue savings estimate since the start of ABC for refuse collection was forecast at £86,000. A full year's savings of £700,000 would be incorporated in the 07/08 budget.

- Work was being carried out to assess the environmental impact of the Municipal Vehicle Fleet and options for reducing current carbon omissions. A report was expected by the end of March which would feed into NFDC's Green Audit review. TVBC was looking at conducting a similar green fleet review.
- A common type of accident across both authorities was associated with reversing incidents with refuse vehicles. NFDC's insurers had highlighted the high level of claims relating to vehicle accidents and the probability of increased premiums. As a result investigations are currently underway to consider the use of banksmen to assist with reversing and a programme of driver training to ensure skill levels are maintained.
- The NFDC Building Works section had now taken on the responsibility for all 4 maintenance areas of the Housing Reactive Maintenance contract and a budget of £1.7m per annum.
- Romsey Town Council would join the TVBC out of hour's emergency standby scheme as of 15<sup>th</sup> January 2007. They would contribute a cost of £624.00 per annum to the emergency standby fund. Call out fees would be additional.
- TVBC and NFDC were looking to abolish the summer/winter working hours within Grounds Maintenance across both Councils. The work during the year had now evened out due to a number of factors including a longer grass cutting season and taking on work from the Environment Agency. To ease the transition to a standard 37 hour week it was proposed to offer each employee up to £80 as a one off payment. Consultations had been carried out with Unison and employees were considering an offer.
- It was anticipated that a mini digger to dig and back fill graves for TVBC would be delivered by 1<sup>st</sup> May 2007.
- Steady progress had been made on the programme of Memorial testing with a 30% failure rate. Where possible the last known owners of the Right of Burial had been contacted and informed that it was their responsibility to repair the headstone. Where there was no contact the Council would have to find an alternative option to make the headstone safe. Most of the failures were attributed to certain types of stone and it was suggested that this information should be passed on to stonemasons and relatives. Most of the failures were due to the dowels failing and this could be repaired for approximately £75/£80 per headstone. NFDC were looking to put this out to tender.
- The consultants review of TV street cleaning concluded that standards were good but could be better. Improvements identified included productivity improvements and a move towards manual rather than mechanical cleaning.
- Discussions on street cleaning were being carried out with Totton and Eling Town Council for 07/08.
- The new PC at St Thomas Street Car Park would be completed on target in early March.
- The Committee were updated on the costs of vandalism at the village centre at Fawley and Fordingbridge.
- Both Authorities had benefited from the joint procurement exercise recently completed for the vehicle replacement programme for 2006/07 and 2007/08.
- TVBC were making use of the services of NFDC's Central Purchasing Unit. £8,000 of savings had been made by consolidating the electricity contracts of 19 TVBC sites. The other 13 sites would be looked at when their contracts came to an end.

The Vice-Chairman congratulated the Head of Environment and Health on the smooth implementation of the ABC scheme. He also praised her on the level of expertise, professionalism and public engagement.

The special meeting of the Commercial Services Joint Committee and Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee to consider the Partnership Review report had been postponed until after the Elections on 3<sup>rd</sup> May. Concern was raised that the partnership had stagnated and that residents of both Authorities were not benefiting from any possible savings and some hard and difficult decisions would need to be made. Although the partnership had not progressed as quickly as some members would have liked, it was felt that this was going in the right direction.

Members resolved:

- (1) That the additional one off payment to Grounds Maintenance staff up to £80 in respect of changing their terms and conditions of employment to a standard 37 hour week, to be met from within existing budgets in 2006/07, be approved.
- (2) That the content of the report be noted.

**Chairman**