

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

**(Meeting held on 4 March 2008)**

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Cllr G Beck

### **2. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December were confirmed as correct.

### **3. DIRECTORS REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>st</sup> APRIL 2007 TO 31<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 2007**

Consideration was given to the Director's Report which covered the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007.

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

The New Forest District Council (NFDC) accounts showed an under spend of £37,174 against the 2007/08 latest profile budget. A break down of the reasons for the net under spends was explained to the Committee.

Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) accounts to the end December 2007 showed an overall surplus of £48,974 against a projected surplus for the period of £178,632, a shortfall of £129,658. Since the report was written a revised budget indicated that a break even figure was more likely, due to an increase in recharge costs outside the control to Commercial Services.

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

The Committee were updated and discussed the following key issues:

- The land drainage service was currently overspent by £32,119 mainly due to a shortfall in income from the Environment Agency and capital and rechargeable works jobs in the Engineers business unit of £42,000. This was partially offset by savings on maintenance works of £9,000. Supplementary budget approval has been approved for this shortfall.
- The outstanding debtor account of £1,202.45 for grounds maintenance had now been cleared. The outstanding debtor account of 1.158.43 for transport was proving hard to obtain and was likely to be passed to legal to pursue.
- Members were informed that the management structure of the Partnership would need to be reviewed in the light of the senior management review being undertaken at New Forest. Any proposed changes would be brought back to the Joint Committee.
- The programme of essential skills training at both TV and NF has been well received. A further 3 short courses are due to be run at TV by the end of March with the aim of attracting the remaining 21 staff members yet to access a course. Progression courses will now be organised for those wishing to further their learning to the next level. It is likely that these courses will be aimed at IT learning in the first instance.
- The HCC Highways Term Maintenance Contract has now been re-tendered. The successful contractor, Amey PLC, will commence the new contract from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008. As the contract has been awarded to a new contractor discussions will now need to be held with Amey to explore opportunities for NFDC continuing the partnering arrangement that currently exists with Balfour Beattie

- The Building Works section (TV) has continued to experience a down turn in the volume of work over the last three months; this has resulted in the section not being able to fully utilise its labour resources. This down turn in works is directly linked to delays in the completion of the asset management plan and in turn a lack of client budgets for this year to cover planned building maintenance repairs and refurbishments. However, it was recognised that it was crucial to ensure that the asset management plan was robust and could not be rushed.
- A tender had been submitted by the grounds maintenance section for the work of spraying the kerb lines with herbicide for Hampshire County Council, but had been unsuccessful.
- The Basingstoke Schools contract ended on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007. Two employees from the grounds maintenance section transferred under TUPE regulations and two employees took up vacancies with TVBC.
- There is an opportunity to tender for grounds maintenance work within East Dorset District Council. Currently expressions of interest are being sought. Members agreed that officers seek further details and return a tender if appropriate.
- Following a recent recruitment exercise, Tony Harris had been appointed as Waste & Recycling Manager and will commence his duties on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. Tony is currently employed as Refuse Manager for Stevenage Borough Council and will be a welcome addition to the team.
- The TV waste collection service is operating well. Further work on balancing the rounds has been completed with a view to the changes taking place towards the end of January 2008. The number of properties expected to have a day change is in the region of 500. Unlike the major round balancing exercise conducted during the summer of 2007 there will be no cycle changes for residents.
- Work is continuing on the development of the new street cleaning service with a view to the new service commencing April 2008. The new service will adopt a team based approach splitting the Test Valley area into 3 distinct teams. In addition to the Cleansing Supervisor, each team will be supported by a team leader. The teams are also structured to have spare capacity to cover for annual leave. All aspects of service delivery will be designed using a range of frequencies depending on the area. This presents a particular challenge with regard to routes and work programmes and is a departure from the old style of working where a blanket frequency was used regardless of area type.
- Work on re-launching the Test Valley neighbourhood recycling centres is nearing completion. Tender documents for the supply of recycling banks and collection of materials have been dispatched. It is envisaged that the collection contract will commence during April 2008. The Committee were keen to see if there was any effect on recycling rates as a result of these changes.
- The long awaited report from the Health & Safety Executive regarding heavy bins was received mid November. The contents and subsequent recommendations have been assessed and a meeting with the inspectors has taken place. All issues are now satisfactorily resolved.

The Committee requested that the green waste collection services at each Council be compared (financially and operationally) in more detail at the next meeting. Officers undertook to provide further comparisons including the costs of the schemes, take up rates and the amount of green waste produced.

The Chairman suggested that Members might like to consider putting forward ideas for the 2008/09 Partnership Service Plan which Officers were working on. A draft would be circulated to all Members of the Joint Committee for comment.

The Joint Committee agreed:

1. That the report be noted.

2. That Officers be authorised to seek further information on the East Dorset District Council Grounds Maintenance tender in accordance with the agreed Scheme of Delegations.

Chairman