

**LOCAL PROCUREMENT REVIEW  
(Report by the Head of Administration)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2006, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) considered the question of local procurement by the Council and its potential impact in promoting the local economy in Huntingdonshire. The Panel appointed a Working Group comprising Councillors D B Dew, P J Downes and R J West whose report and recommendations were endorsed by the Panel in January 2007.
- 1.2 Further reports were submitted to the Panel in March and December 2007 on the outcome of further meetings between Members of the Panel and representatives of the local business community.
- 1.3 It was agreed in December that a further meeting would be held after six months had elapsed and the purpose of this report is to acquaint Members with the discussions that took place at that meeting. The following actions had been agreed when the previous meeting took place:-
- Procurement Manager to investigate the procurement rules used by local authorities and to consider whether any standardisation would be possible;
  - Sustainable Economic Development Manager to consider the inclusion of procurement on the agenda for the next breakfast forum meeting;
  - consideration to be given to the implications of the Council's emerging Environment Strategy.

**2. REVIEW OF PROCUREMENT**

- 2.1 The meeting held on the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008 was chaired by Councillor M G Baker and attended by Councillors K M Baker, P J Downes and R J West with representatives from the Huntingdonshire Business Network (Mr T Downing), the Huntingdonshire Federation of Small Business (Mr M Mealing) and Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce (Mr S Taylor). Executive Councillors C R Hyams and T V Rogers were also in attendance.
- 2.2 With regard to the actions agreed at the previous meeting, the Procurement Manager and Sustainable Economic Development Manager reported that work was ongoing to standardise the terms and conditions of procurement with other district councils within the County and it was also intended to standardise the thresholds for tendering in the future. The meeting discussed

how other authorities within the County compared in local procurement and was informed that the procurement rules used by local authorities were based upon statutory requirements. While standardisation was welcomed by the local business representatives as being a step forward, mention was made of the need not to lose focus of the review's original aim of promoting the local economy in Huntingdonshire and alerting local business about possible business opportunities.

- 2.3 In that regard, comment was made that the electronic alert for additions to the contract register was still not working. The Group expressed their disappointment that this continued to be a problem and Councillor T V Rogers undertook to become involved if the situation was not resolved within the next month.
- 2.4 The business representatives indicated that they were looking to the District Council to flag up appropriate local procurement opportunities where they arose. Having queried, for example, where South Cambs District Council sourced their commodities, the meeting was advised that procurement opportunities were shared currently across district council websites within the County.
- 2.5 Mr S Taylor reported that the Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce organised informal network meetings with local businesses and he suggested that it might be useful if a representative from the District Council could attend a future meeting to advise businesses how they might best secure procurement opportunities with local authorities. Work was also ongoing by the District Council's Economic Development team to develop supply chain networks through a "meet the buyer" event scheduled to take place on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2008. The event would provide opportunities for local businesses to speak to buyers from public sector organisations and establish the best means of doing business with them.
- 2.6 The meeting was pleased to note that the issue of local procurement had been included on the agenda for the breakfast forum meeting held in January 2008.
- 2.7 The Sustainable Economic Development Officer reported on developments within the Economic Development service since the previous meeting. In doing so, the meeting was informed that the Local Economy Strategy had recently been reviewed and that local procurement and the need to develop supply chains had featured as a priority. Whilst the "meet the buyer" project had already been referred to, the meeting was informed about the Huntingdonshire Food Festival, work to develop a manufacturing club in Huntingdon and the development of the County Council's web-based business directory which had expanded significantly in recent months. The meeting also noted that Business Link were marketing a number of courses to help

small businesses identify what they should do to trade successfully with the public sector.

- 2.8 The District Council's Head of Environmental Management then updated the Group on the production of the Council's Environment Strategy which placed an emphasis on sustainable purchasing. One of the actions in the Strategy would require all Council tender specifications to include a section on sustainability and sustainable purchasing guidance was being produced to ensure sustainable and ethical purchasing within the organisation. Work was also ongoing to prepare a leaflet for distribution to 70,000 householders giving practical advice on what they can do to benefit the environment including greener purchasing. The meeting noted that whilst the focus was predominately on domestic purchasing, the District Council could look to produce an appropriate document for business if this was thought to be required.
- 2.9 Having noted that the District Council was currently seeking opportunities to promote its "green" messages, business representatives made a number of suggestions including a forthcoming mail drop by the Huntingdonshire Regional College, a possible presentation at the Economic Forum and informal meetings organised by the Chamber of Trade. Business representatives indicated that they would welcome the opportunity to work with the Council once appropriate links on the website were up and running.
- 2.10 In discussing a number of other issues, the meeting noted that arrangements were being made to invite Ofcom into the District to discuss the delivery of electronic media, which the Group were asked to support.
- 2.11 Councillor M G Baker raised a question about business waste and whether there was any defined strategy for its disposal. Although this was not a function of the District Council, Councillor Hyams undertook to provide further information on the investigations which had been undertaken with the Operations Division. It was generally considered that businesses should be encouraged to recycle where possible.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 Following a positive and constructive discussion it was agreed that it would be useful to meet again in March 2009 to review progress. With this in mind it was agreed that the Panel be

### **RECOMMENDED**

to authorise a future meeting with business representatives on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

Minutes and Reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support)

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