

**LOCAL PROCUREMENT REVIEW  
(Report by the Head Democratic and Central Services)**

**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 and October 2008 on the outcome of further meetings between Members of the Panel and representatives of the local business community.
- 1.3 It was agreed in September that a further meeting would be held in March and the purpose of this report is to acquaint Members with the discussions that took place at that meeting.

**2. REVIEW OF PROCUREMENT**

- 2.1 The meeting held on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009 was chaired by Councillor M G Baker and attended by Councillors K M Baker and R J West with representatives from the Huntingdonshire Business Network (Mr T Downing) and the Huntingdonshire Federation of Small Business (Mr M Mealing). Executive Councillors C R Hyams and T V Rogers were also in attendance.
- 2.2 The District Council's Procurement Manager informed the Group of the increase in local spend by the District Council, the figure having risen from 11% to 18%. The majority had been incurred on construction. It was noted that the average payment time for invoices by the Council was 17 working days, well ahead of the target of 30 days. The Group was updated on the ongoing work to standardise the terms and conditions of procurement with other district councils. It was requested that the Council would be adopting a procedure of sending out a standardised regional questionnaire, tailored to the District Council's requirements, with every tender. The Procurement Manager had recently attended an Olympic procurement breakfast meeting locally where he had been able to give advice to local businesses.
- 2.3 The Acting Sustainable Economic Development Manager reported on recent initiatives by the economic development service since the last meeting. The meeting was informed that the Food Festival had attracted 2500 visitors, with

47 exhibitors attending and 5 new supply chains having been created locally. The list of initiatives also included a 'Buyer Meets Supplier' event which 70 businesses had attended, an Olympic procurement breakfast meeting and a Christmas 'Shop Local' promotion. The team was about to embark on a retail study marketing market towns, and was looking at working with local coach companies to promote St Ives following the introduction of the Guided Busway later in the year. Work had also been undertaken to produce visitor guides supporting the market towns and smaller Visit Huntingdonshire guides, promoting the town centres as well as embarking on a street scene project. The issue of the poor turn out at the traditional market was raised and it was explained that this was a traditionally quiet time for stallholders. However a bid had been made for funds for a local food project, which if successful would enable the further promotion of local farmers and food markets.

- 2.4 The District Council's Head of Environmental Management acquainted the Group with the details of the recent purchase of 2 properties, in St Ives and St Neots which were to be used by the District Council as demonstration properties to showcase renewable technologies and energy efficiency as part of its low carbon agenda. The Environmental Management team would be working with local tradesmen and suppliers to equip the properties where possible. Councillor M G Baker raised the possibility of using the properties to make the visiting public aware of local companies therefore helping to create business opportunities.
- 2.5 The Group was also made aware of business energy grants that were now available to those businesses that were able to commit to energy efficiency, and the launch of 'Green Champions' within the services of the District Council, which it was felt could also be encouraged in the private sector.
- 2.6 In discussing local issues, the business representatives highlighted the need for continued promotion of local companies and the local economy through the District Council's online business directory and other media and also stressed the need to present a positive picture. Whilst pleased with the aforementioned local procurement figure of 18% it was suggested that a target be set for the District Council to aim towards in the future.
- 2.7 In acknowledging the comments made by Mr G Buck at the HSP Executive meeting concerning the perceived lack of opportunities for local businesses to pursue procurement opportunities with the District Council, it was agreed that the meeting had dealt with the issues raised.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

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

#### **RECOMMENDED**

to authorise a future meeting with business representatives in September 2009.

#### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

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

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