

**LOCAL PROCUREMENT MEETING**  
(Report of the Local Procurement Meeting)

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The Local Procurement meeting held on the 14th September 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 Lyons). Executive Councillors C R Hyams and T V Rogers were also in attendance.

**2. LOCAL PROCURMENT MEETING**

- 2.1 The Chairman opened the meeting by advising those present of the Economic Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel's decision to request the Strategic Partnership's Economic Prosperity and Skills Thematic Group to assume responsibility for local procurement. As the Thematic Group's remit includes responsibility for local businesses and representatives from the same local business networks attend its meetings, this decision would prevent duplication of work. It was explained that the local procurement meeting had originated out of a recommendation made by a Working Group appointed by former Service Support Panel as part of a study. The study had been concluded in 2007.

- 2.2 In response to questions, those present were advised of the structure of the three new Overview and Scrutiny Panels, that the Service Support Panel had been replaced by Economic Wellbeing Panel and how Strategic Partnership, its Thematic Groups and their reporting procedures were structured. The Economic Prosperity and Skills Thematic Group's Chairman is Malcolm Lyons, who also represents the Federation of Small Businesses. Other members of the Thematic Group include representatives from the Chambers of Commerce and Business Link and Councillor Hansard, Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy.

**3. REPORT OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

- 3.1 The report of the previous meeting of the Working Group was received and noted.

**4. PROGRESS SINCE THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

- 4.1 The Procurement Manager provided a breakdown of the Council's expenditure, which had increased particularly in respect of construction work that had been carried out at the leisure centres. He went on to explain that a significant change in procurement was about to take place with the introduction of the E-Marketplace, a web based system that

would enable electronic ordering, receipting and invoicing. It was hoped that the implementation of the system would produce savings by providing access to a wide range of suppliers and competitive tenderers. The Council's current supply base would be informed of this change prior to its introduction and it was likely to provide an opportunity for local businesses to trade with the Council. It was hoped that the system's format and accreditation requirements would not be a deterrent to small businesses.

- 4.2 The Sustainable Economic Development Manager advised the group of the events and initiatives that had been instigated by her department over the last months and those that were planned. These included free courses on how to set up a market stall, the Food Festival, a 'Shop local' Christmas promotion, a business competition to win a unit in the Creativexchange, funding opportunities and work to promote empty retail units to national retail agents.
- 4.3 In updating the group on the local retrofit project, the Head of Environmental Management reported that he had received over 20 expressions of interest from local businesses in undertaking work on the project; however, he had some concerns over the ability of some of the smaller ones to comply with the Council's requirement for contractors to be members of the Contractor Health and Safety Scheme (CHAS). It was agreed that the Procurement Manager and the Head of Environmental Management should liaise on this matter after consulting the Council's Health and Safety Adviser.

## **5. ISSUES RAISED BY BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES**

- 5.1 Following questions, the Procurement Manager assured those present that full training would be offered to suppliers on the E-Marketplace system and that subscriptions would be covered by the Council initially, with a charge of £48 per annum being made after the first year.
- 5.2 Mr Downing urged the Council to look further than the High Street when trying to help local businesses. He also stated that although the Council made 20% of its purchasing locally, there was room here for improvement. Finally, he referred to the disparity in car park charges amongst the District's towns.
- 5.3 Councillor Rogers, Executive Councillor for Finance, advised those present that fewer than expected firms had applied for hardship relief.

Councillor M G Baker  
Chairman