

## Report on progress so far to Marketing and Development Scrutiny Panel – Insourcing

### Councilor Faith Ponsonby

**Insourcing** = providing services by our own staff to other public authorities, private companies or members of the public, bringing in money to HBC and/or bringing back services which have been outsourced into our direct provision.

I have considered those areas of HBC where our own staff have particular expertise, and which is 'saleable' to others. I decided that areas we have already outsourced are probably being well provided by an external provider, and have been scrutinised relatively recently – eg those provided by Capita.

I have had 4 meetings so far looking at 3 different areas, and they have proved very fruitful.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

### Meeting on 15/3/13 with Debbie Fox and Caroline Tickner

This is now a shared service with E. Hants and is working well, with 9.27 FTE staff currently covering both authorities.

#### ***What activities done by HR could be marketed to other authorities and/or to private organisations?***

There is already a host website 'Liberata' which advertises services for local authorities to buy/sell to each other. However it needs to be developed further by Liberata before it could be used by this Council to 'sell' its services to others.

#### ***Do you have the capacity to cope with more (outside) work at the moment?***

Need much more HR support following the huge changes in HBC/EHDC. HR staff would need to become more commercially aware if dealing with private organisations. There is a need to invest to help shape cultures. Identifying some frontline services, eg Coastal regeneration, HR supports and facilitates these areas. However part of HR is developing managers and devolving more to line management. As part of the Service Delivery team, there are HR Business partners, who take the lead on complex HR matters and the provision of HRServices.

#### ***Is training an area which could be shared?***

The corporate training plan is being set, but capacity prevents us doing inhouse training. So in 2013/14 are working with other providers to develop our own material, and if places are spare, offer to other people, eg training with fire and police authorities. We are linking in with other authorities, eg Winchester CC are supporting an appeal process. There is a H&IOW HR Forum which is picking up again. There is a need to develop resiliency to change: change is here to stay, and we need to equip staff not just to cope with it (reactive), but to lead on it (proactive).

#### ***What about absenteeism, and management role?***

The statistics on absenteeism are carefully monitored, and HR work actively with line managers, also providing workshops.

***What problems might arise if outside work, especially for private organisations, was taken on?***

There is a difference in ethos and culture, and would need to tailor courses. We should not run before we can walk, and need to build capacity.

## **BUILDING CONTROL**

**Meeting on 28/3/13 with Julia Potter and Robin Seamer.**

Questions were going to be similar to above, but Robin had already been thinking along the same lines.

***What activities that you do could be marketed to other authorities and/or to private organisations?***

Building regs for all building work can be done by 'approved inspectors', as well as the Council who operate in this competitive market - the customer (agent, developer or householder) choosing if they prefer to use the Local Authority route or Approved Inspector Route. There is a shortage of inspectors in some areas, and the Council are 'trusted' to provide this service by its customers. The Council could offer its Building Control staff and services to other councils where they have staff shortages. We cannot make money on building regs, but the outcome is better quality housing.

Work can come through registering on Local Authority Building Control website which has a 'consult' button.

The Building Control Service is already readying itself to providing additional non-Building Regulation services for which there is a demand in the market and from which income can be generated. The 2 main new services it is currently working on providing are Code for Sustainable Homes assessments (staff need to be trained) and Fire Risk Assessments. Colin Adams is training to be a fire risk assessor, as the Fire Service no longer do this, so that he can do the assessments on our own buildings, but there could be a capacity issue if we offer services outside, and then trained employee leaves. Housing Assns have their own fire risk assessors, but there is an external market to community halls, leisure centres and private landlords. Again risk that we might not have the staff to cope with demand. Other services are also being investigated.

Another potential area is the Energy Performance Rating, for public buildings, which have to have certificates displayed, current for every year. Could offer this assessment to local businesses. Other possibilities include Green Deal. Meeting with Penny Brown re green deal. 'Green Deal' assessors can look at what can be done, and this report can stay with the property. Potential market could collapse, but skills would be transferable. This needs structural qualifications, and at the moment are using external consultants. If we trained a member of staff, might save. Also 'Access audits' – all public buildings have to have these regularly re-assessed. We are already dealing with this for new builds, so could offer this. For some other areas, eg landscape assessment, technical evidence is needed, which is not sensibly provided inhouse.

The services will be offered to developers – offering a discount on building regs if they used additional services. Robin has been talking to Steve (Weaver) and Chris (Murray) and could offer a consultancy liaising with developers early. Eg in Bordon, assessors could not do this on old houses. Code assessment approx. £1500 per house.

***Could we work with other Councils?***

New Forest have their own assessor, but Fareham and Gosport do not yet. Possibility for working with them.

**Meeting on 8/5/13 with Julia Potter and Jamie Gargett**

Following the meeting with Julia and Robin, we arranged to meet Jamie to see if there was expertise in our arboriculture that is 'saleable'.

***What activities are done by you that could be marketed to other authorities and/or to private organisations?***

For developers, Jamie said that currently there is a charge of £100 for 'pre-app' advice to give a condition/safety survey on trees on the site. This covers a 30min site visit, and 30 min writing up. Bigger developments charge the same for a 'constraints plan'. However there was a possibility of providing a more detailed report, rather than purely statutory advice. Jamie will work out if there could be a sliding scale of charges depending on the number of homes. Risk that this could be seen as invidious, but as it is pre-app advice might not conflict. We needed to ask for a legal view. No-one else is doing this sort of work. For public companies, there is a possible service if they have land with trees on site, as they have a duty of care for insurance purposes to identify foreseeable risks. We need to talk to our insurers about the risk of indemnity against missing signs of decay, etc.

***What about the advice given to residents on trees in their properties?***

For members of the public, there is no statutory responsibility, but for community groups (eg tree wardens) the support is free. We also give free advice on trees on HCC property (eg schools) and could investigate making an annual charge to HCC for this advice. For instance, we pay HCC an annual fee to provide advice on building sites on the habitat, so we could do the same for trees in reverse. We cannot charge for advice on TPOs.

Jamie also said there were possible savings in our parks if we only pruned trees for health and safety, rather than pruning to provide light. We only have a small budget for our green spaces compared with Portsmouth-owned land in the Borough.

***Do you have the capacity to cope with extra work?***

An apprentice is coming for shared job for 2 years, will be given the project of a TPO review.

**PRINTING SERVICES**

**Meeting on 15/3/13 with Jo Barden-Hernandez.**

***Does our printing service have capacity to cope with outside work?***

The equipment is at the end of its life, and is needing to be replaced. There are occasional peaks, but otherwise demand is even. This service could, if it partnered with others provide a service to other parties and is ideal to be considered for insourcing, outsourcing or a management buy out. All these issues are currently being considered by officers who were pleased at the Councillor interest and input.

***Can we sell our service to members of the public who might need printing whilst at the Plaza?***

Yes, we could provide printing at the Plaza for visitors. The issue is around the charging mechanism - for example who takes the payments?

For any of the Council's services there is the ability to sell the service provided the service becomes cost neutral. A profit can be made by a service but where that profit is assured over a period of time a Council must then set up a company in order to continue trading at a profit.