

ANGUS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMITTEE

7 NOVEMBER 2000

MOTOR VEHICLE SERVICING etc. COLLABORATION PROJECT

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Abstract

This report advises of a collaboration scheme between several Scottish Local Authorities to set up a vehicle servicing checking unit to assist Consumer Protection enforcement work.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee

- (i) note the content of this report, and,
- (ii) agree the funding input of £2500

2. BACKGROUND

In April this year, Report No 388/00 advised the Committee of a proposal to bid to the Department of Trade and Industry for collaboration funding to fund a project or projects along with other local authorities.

At that time the Committee agreed a recommendation that I explore funding possibilities, although the projected schemes being put forward revolved around Information Technology applications.

What has developed, having been required to satisfy certain restrictive DTI criteria is a project relating to a more practical proposal to carry out checks on car repairs and servicing.

3. THE SUCCESSFUL BID

Some twelve Local Authorities have indicated support for a collaborative scheme for a mobile "cross-border" motor vehicle examination and testing service, which can be utilised by any Scottish Local Authority Trading Standards Service. The unit will be designed to help with a range of statutory duties including car servicing surveys, forecourt inspection of second hand car sales, consumer complaint resolution and good trader award schemes.

The unit is to be self contained and as independent as possible, having all necessary equipment to provide a comprehensive technical service.

The scheme is to operate on a lead authority basis under local authority control, and will provide an example of best value and best practice for others to follow.

The objectives of the project are to: -

1. achieve a high level of consumer protection within the motor vehicle sector,
2. achieve a reputation for the unit for expertise and impartiality in providing a service to local authorities and,
3. raise the profile of enforcement work in this sector, and demonstrate how authorities can co-operate with each other and with external agencies (such as the Vehicle Inspectorate) and the Police.

The Lead Authority will be Dundee City.

4. FUNDING

The total cost of the project has been set at £150,000 in the first year with 50% of that being provided by the Department of Trade & Industry. Each participating authority will need to input around £5000 to the scheme with around 50% of that being staff resource.

Consequently, a cash input from Angus of around £2500 in this financial year will be required, and, with no funds being available through Angus Council's oversubscribed policy-led budget fund, this sum has had to be found within the Department's current revenue budget. Funding for further involvement beyond 2001 will depend on the budget situation in future years.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of participation in this collaborating scheme will be in the region of £2500 which can be accommodated within the Department's current revenue budget.

6. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, The Director of Finance and The Director of Law & Administration have been consulted on the contents of this report.

7. CONCLUSION

This is a worthwhile co-operative venture which may lead to further projects of this type. A report on the outcomes is required to be provided to the Department of Trade & Industry, and a copy will be made available to Angus Council.

The Office of Fair Trading has identified the car servicing sector as one of extreme concern to consumers, with complaint statistics showing an increasing trend.

This cross-border scheme, with collaboration between one third of Scottish Local Authorities, will be our contribution to alleviating some of the concerns of our local motoring consumers.

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information were relied on to any material extent in preparing this report).

Stewart Heggie
Director of Environmental & Consumer Protection

JM/HA
18/10/00