

P & T tackles abandoned vehicles

An abandoned vehicle is an eyesore - and sometimes a danger too. A collapse in scrap values means cars are now dumped more often. District councils are responsible for collecting them but the County must arrange disposal and it is often impossible to trace the owner.

Planning and Transportation recently advertised seven contracts for the storage and disposal of abandoned vehicles – one contract for each district. Three different companies were successful, after a tendering process which involved the District councils. Some will provide services to more than one district and in five cases the current contractor successfully retained the work.

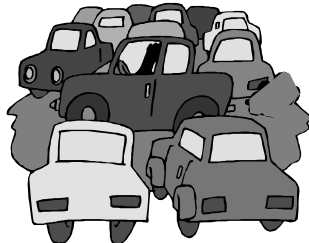
In 2001-02, the County Council dealt with 1,856 abandoned vehicles through

contractors, at an average cost of £98 each. This was nearly double the number in the previous year and the figure is expected to keep rising.

“Although having a different contract for each district means more administrative work, it gives us important flexibility in our joint working with other authorities and means we can tailor the storage and disposal service for each part of the county more effectively,” said Howard Hobson, who oversaw the contract process for Planning and Transportation.

Alison Smith

01603 224222



Invoice payments

Payment performance on the up

We have recently prepared NCC's payment performance data for BVPI8 (payment of invoices within 30 days) for the financial year just gone.

Thanks to the ongoing efforts of colleagues across the authority and within Capita we have managed to maintain good performance and improve slightly on last year's results.

Our overall performance for 2001-02 was 93.7% payments made on time against a target of 97.5%.

Whilst we did not achieve the target in full we are not alone and Norfolk is doing well in comparison with other authorities - in 2000-01 we were comfortably in the top 25%.

This year's target of payments made on time is 100%! Your commitment and enthusiasm is essential to help maintain and build upon the high standards we have achieved so far.

The Accounts Payable Focus Group meets regularly to discuss issues around payment performance and other related topics.

If you would like further information about the Focus Group or payment performance, please contact either Peter Shackley (01603 222916) or Jo Quarterman (01603 222995) in Exchequer Client Support.



Spotlight on

Trading Standards Finance

Finance During Foot & Mouth

In comparison with other County Council departments, Trading Standards is relatively small, as is its finance function. Even though we are small we still have to service the variety of day to day finance tasks necessary to keep the department running smoothly. These include purchasing, processing creditor's invoices and raising/processing debtor's accounts, maintaining petty cash, budget monitoring and preparation, collation of annual statistics and closing of accounts.

But since the foot and mouth outbreak last year, life in Trading Standards Finance has become considerably busier and more complex.

In March 2001 licensing of animals for slaughter began in areas, including Norfolk, which hadn't suffered any outbreaks of foot and mouth. This meant setting up a centre to process requests for slaughter licences.

This was located in the emergency planning bunker at County Hall and until last July was staffed by existing Trading Standards staff. From July onwards a decision was taken to run the centre using a majority of casual staff.

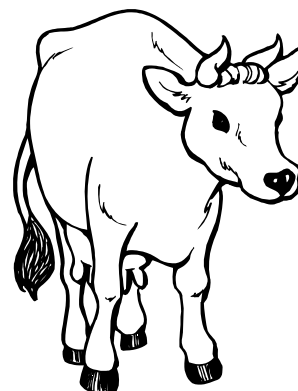
Nationally no additional funding was available for farm-to-slaughter licensing.

We have therefore had to fund this within the constraints of our existing budget. It was really important that we were able to monitor the costs of the licensing centre and also have the ability to forecast what our costs would be during the coming months.

In September the Autumn Movements Licensing Scheme, later called Interim Movements Licensing Scheme, was introduced. In addition to licensing movements of animals for slaughter, this scheme introduced a new licensing arrangement for movement of animals from farm to farm.

Government funding would be available for farm to farm movements/enforcement, but farm to slaughter movements/enforcement would still continue to be funded from our existing budget.

At the same time, we moved our licensing centre out of the emergency planning bunker and set up and staffed a larger licensing operation from our accommodation at County Hall.



For Finance in particular, this has meant significant additional work in setting up and maintaining systems to identify all of the costs associated with this new regime, and in ensuring that all of our staff are aware of them.

This ensures that we always have the necessary documentation to be able to justify our claims to the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Michelle Brasier
01603 222380

If you would like this newsletter in large print, audio, braille, alternative format or in a different language, please contact Angie Yeomans on 01603 223488 or on minicom 223833.

**IN
TRAN**
communication for all

PRACTICE BEING GOOD . . .

Effective Meetings!



"Why is it in our meetings we can keep the minutes but we seem to lose the hours?"

Meetings are a crucial means to achieve results but can use up people's time and have a cost. Adrian Thompson from Norfolk Audit Services (NAS) says that recent audits have found important decisions are not always properly documented, leading to mistakes and confusion. So what should we be doing to ensure that we are being as efficient as we can?

Here is a simple exercise. Think about the last meeting you went to and see if you can tick the box.

Do you:

- Have an agenda covering the key points to be discussed? ☐
- Circulate the information or options with adequate time for reading? ☐
- Decide what each item is for - information, discussion, action, comment? ☐
- Lay out the options with the recommended action proposed? ☐
- Deal with important matters first? ☐
- Receive apologies for absence or allow a representative? ☐
- Keep minutes of what was agreed and who should do what by when? ☐
- Check that *all* the last meeting's action points have been dealt with? ☐

If you are missing some ticks, there is room for improvement!

Adrian Thompson

01603 222784

€URO HINTS & TIPS

It's a while since we have reported on the Euro so for the first in a series of regular updates....

Much has happened since the last article and, if you have visited one of the 12 countries in the Eurozone since 1 January 2002, you will have first hand experience of the new currency.

So which countries are in the Eurozone?

Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

Will the UK join?

Whether the UK should join the European Monetary Union (EMU) continues to be debated but before any decision can be made 5 economic tests must be met. If UK entry is recommended, it will be put to a vote in Parliament and to a referendum. Media reports suggest the assessment will be made this autumn with a referendum in spring 2003. The changeover period is expected to be less than 2 years, which could mean a change of currency as early as January 2005.

NCC preparations

General planning work is underway and a team of departmental Euro Co-ordinators assembled to help gather details of service issues and key risk areas. A planning tool is expected imminently from central government to assist with this work.

If a referendum returns a "YES" vote, our plan is to be prepared!

Karen Betts

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Treasury Management



This daily process is far from being a lottery . . .

Have you ever dreamed of winning the National Lottery and wondering how you would manage and invest all those millions? Well that's the challenge faced by the Treasury Management team on a daily basis - how best to invest millions of pounds!

The millions involved represent the pooled cash balances of Norfolk County Council and other bodies such as



The Money Managers - from left Robert Mayes, Paul Batterham, Carol Hale, Andy Feek and Glenn Cossey

Norfolk Police Authority to whom we provide treasury management services.

On an average day we invest £50m to £70m. Unsurprisingly we have to give great care and consideration to risk and return. We spread the investment, and therefore the risk, over a number of UK banks and building societies and overseas banks operating in the UK.

These institutions must meet rigorous criteria and are subject to continuous review. We use money brokers and market intelligence to ensure that we are getting the best possible interest rate.

The interest rate can change daily, reflecting money shortages in the economy and the general movement of UK Base Rates. The movement in interest rates, together with the Council's overall cashflow position, play an important part in determining our investment strategy.

We can invest money up to a maximum of 364 days. Much of the daily process is automated - the downloading of our bank balances from the Co-operative Bank's Financial Director system, the calculation of cash balances for investment and the processing and transmission of the money market transactions. The real cut and thrust is the dialogue with the money market brokers and financial institutions to try and secure the best investment possible.

So how much interest do we earn?

In 2001-02 we undertook 624 money market transactions, earning £2.7m, with an average interest rate of 4.6%.

If you would like further information on treasury management please contact Glenn Cossey 01603 222159 or Andy Feek 01603 222826.

******* Finance & IS *******

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