



A Reminder of Spring, and a Spring Reminder ...

Welcome to the spring edition of Purchasing Power

As the new financial year has just begun I thought it a good time to remind everyone of the legal framework with which we must comply when buying goods or services on behalf of the Council or any public sector body. There is a great deal of misunderstanding and confusion about what rules and regulations apply to us and why, so I'll try to explain.

There are two levels of rules that we need to comply with:



1. European Procurement Directive which is embodied into UK Procurement Legislation
2. Contract Standing Orders, which are set and agreed by the organisation, i.e. Norfolk County Council, or a School Board of Governors.

Although the strict application of the EU Procurement Directive only applies to contracts that are over the financial thresholds, there is an expectation that the basic principles will be complied with for all public sector procurement. This is important as we are often asked whether the rules still apply if we have received funding from elsewhere and the answer is yes! These principles are based on the Treaty of Rome, which are:

- ◇ No discrimination on the grounds of nationality
- ◇ Equal treatment of all potential bidders and suppliers
- ◇ Fair competition
- ◇ Proportionality
- ◇ Transparency

The EU Directive is updated and enhanced periodically and the financial limits, above which it is mandatory, are updated every two years. The current limits (updated in Jan 2008) are £139,893 for goods and services and £3,497,313 for works contracts.

The main area for confusion is around when the rules do not fully apply and when exceptions or exemptions can be allowed. To help understand this we need to remember that 'exceptions' are from our own (NCC's) Contract Standing Orders and that no one can authorise an exception from the EU Directive. What this means is that for contracts that fall below the threshold the Council can decide not to follow it's own rules relating to quotations and tenders if there is good reason to do so.

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This newsletter is also available on the intranet.

If you have any interesting articles or news items that could be included in future issues please let us know.

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Contract News

ESPO Contract 206 Brown and White Goods

The above contract has been extended to 30 September 2009. This is to give ESPO time to research the market place and prepare a tender for the new contract starting in October.



BDC Commercial Supplies ceased trading last autumn and since then Bennett's Trade Sales Direct have been the sole supplier on the contract.

Details of the contract are available from CPU.

ESPO Contract 282 Supply of Office Furniture



Following a Novation letter from the administrators of Desk Link regarding the newly formed company, ESPO has now confirmed that the contract has officially been reassigned by the contracts panel, confirming the continuation of the contract under the original terms and conditions.

Remember that Saber Daynes and Millar West are also on the contract schedule.

Details of all ESPO contracts can be downloaded from the ESPO website <http://www.espodealingdirect.org/index.aspx>.

Tim Howard
Corporate Procurement Unit

Continued from Front Page

The other issue that seems to puzzle many people is that of Priority (often called Part A) and Residual (known as Part B) Services. There are lists of which services fall into which category but Part B services are generally those that would be difficult or unlikely to be provided by another member state (including some health and social services) and Part A covers the rest.

This categorisation just indicates the type of procedure to follow and does not mean that the Directive does not apply. In fact, as the services sector generally develops across Europe many believe that there is very little that cannot be competed for across boundaries. Indeed it is common practice to advertise Part B services in the EU to try to obtain a wider range of service providers and increased innovation and value for money. If this is unlikely to attract any new providers then all contracts must be advertised 'appropriately', which usually means a related trade journal or other publication and of course, the NCC website.

The Procurement Directive continues to develop and in the current financial climate many are requesting radical changes. However, the one benefit of following the laid down procedures is that we can demonstrate that we have used transparent processes and spent public money wisely.

There are increasingly complex challenges, especially emerging from court rulings, and we need to ensure that we get things right but saying that, a little imagination and planning can make sure that our departments can secure the goods and services they need to support the Council's activity in a compliant way that achieves the best results for the budget.

If you need any help or advice about the EU Procurement Directive please ask your own departmental procurement expert or get in touch with the Corporate Procurement Unit on 01603 222820

Jane Waring
Head of Corporate Procurement Unit

Competition - A day at the races



Calling all punters, followers of the "Sport of Kings", studiers of the form and those who just enjoy an occasional flutter!

As some of you may be aware the 2009 flat season gets underway in early April and to mark the occasion this issue's competition has a racing theme.

This issue's fantastic prize has been kindly donated by Great Yarmouth Racecourse and Conference Centre, which is not only Norfolk's only flat racing course but is also one of the local conference venues that are part of our annual business rebate

agreement. This means that a percentage of what we spend is returned to us at the end of each year, and then distributed amongst the departments that contributed toward that spend on a pro-rata basis.



Great Yarmouth Racecourse offers a conference environment that is a bit different from the norm and many of the conference rooms have stunning views across the racecourse. The venue is able to host both large conference events and smaller meetings and offers a variety of conference and food options at competitive rates. For further details and conference enquiries please contact Marie Gates on 01493 842527.

The Corporate Procurement Unit also has copies of events brochures and day delegate packages for Great Yarmouth Racecourse, which we will be happy to pass on.

The competition prize is Premier Enclosure tickets (Premier Badges) for 4 people to a Great Yarmouth 2009 race meeting of the winner's choice. The prize also comes with details of the race calendar to help the winner choose which meeting they wish to attend.

For a chance to win this great prize, you need to answer the racing related questions below:-

1. How many race meetings are there at Great Yarmouth this year?
2. How many furlongs in a mile?
3. What date is Ladies Night at Great Yarmouth Racecourse?
4. What are the two main factors which will cancel a race?
5. Which horse won The Derby in 2008?
6. Which horse sired Desert Orchid?

If you need some assistance, the answers to questions 1-4 can be found on the Great Yarmouth Racecourse website at www.greatyarmouth-racecourse.co.uk - bearing in mind corporate policy on use of the internet - but for question 5 and 6 you are on your own.

Competition entries should be emailed to cpu@norfolk.gov.uk, with a subject line of "Racing Competition" and should include your answers, your department address, and telephone contact details. Closing date for entries will be Friday 29th May. First correct answer drawn randomly out of the hat wins the prize.

NB: We are unable to include individual schools in our arrangements with local conference venues. Unfortunately, Corporate Procurement Unit (CPU) and/or Children's Services don't have the staff resources to make bookings on behalf of all the schools across Norfolk. Similarly, the resource time involved in recharging costs would probably outweigh any benefits. Nevertheless, school staff members are welcome to enter this competition.



Great Yarmouth
Racecourse
& Conference Centre





Prudent Procurement v Perilous Purchasing



Back at the bat-cave, Batman & Robin were discussing the options open to them in light of the Penguin's latest antics. "It doesn't look good Robin." Batman said gravely, "The Penguin's pesky paper purchase orders just won't go away. Why can't they just use iProc?"

"Holy electronic procurement, Batman." Robin replied excitedly, "What is iProc? What are requisitions? What's a portal? And what's a non-catalogue request? Is this another dastardly deviation from the disruptive & despicable Riddler?"

"No Robin. They're just terms used when you use NCC's electronic purchasing system. Maybe the good people of Gotham City don't know how easy it is to use, and the benefits it creates."

"Prudent process savings Batman. Well let's get in there and show them"

"Careful Robin, there are *some* valid reasons for using paper order pads, but we need to tread carefully. We must raise users awareness that iProc is the standard route for placing orders in NCC. They must know it's quicker to use than order pads, and ensures authorised online approval & commitment accounting within Oracle (NCC's main financial system) at the earliest opportunity.

"Mighty molars Batman, that's a lot to chew on," replied a raucous Robin

"But that is not all my diminutive feathered friend, it also means orders can be despatched electronically, which means they can reach the supplier much quicker and in a more cost-effective manner than post, thus providing quicker turnaround by the supplier."

"Cosmic contract standing orders Batman, but how would Commissioner Gordon pay the supplier on time?"

"Don't choke on your bird seed Robin, it's easy. The invoice is matched directly to the purchase order. If there are any discrepancies, Oracle automatically notifies the requisitioner, or manager, so that approval can be made promptly. Having all this information within the system leads to a stack of management information not provided by paper orders."

"Holy tissues! It was right under our noses and we nearly blew it! By the time you can say Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation, I'll have made sure I'm setup to use iProc!"

"Well done Robin. Happy electronic ordering."

For more information about how to use Oracle iProcurement, including FAQ's and mini-guides, please visit our new FIMS webpages at:

http://intranet/new_fims/pages/iProc/iProc_Page.htm

Alan Chappell
Corporate Procurement Unit

Be careful what you ask for... you might just get it

In a previous life I worked within the procurement department of an NHS trust. One day I received an odd request from a colleague in the facilities department. Could I place some orders for them as their whole team had been hit by some sort of virus or bug?

Naturally, being a helpful soul, I said why not and if I could have the details of what they required and who they needed them from I could get right onto it. Emails were exchanged and amongst other items it became my responsibility to ensure the kitchens were provided with 5,000 butter pats for the patient's meal trays.

I used the purchasing system to input all the details provided to me and, happy in the knowledge our patients would not have to suffer dry bread, I moved onto other jobs.

It came as quite a surprise to receive a call from our goods in section 2 days later requesting my IMMEDIATE presence on the loading bay. Being on good terms with the team I couldn't imagine what the issue could be so again hurried off to help.

As I opened the door I saw the goods-in manager red-faced, with a vein set to explode on his forehead, storming towards me. Had he been less furious I might have pointed out how funny he looked hopping around in front of me with his white coat and hair and a beetroot face.

Getting the gist of his ravings it appeared there was an error with one of my orders. Rounding the corner I quickly understood what it was...there parked at the loading bay was the hugest refrigerated wagon I have ever seen, the back of which was loaded from top to bottom and, as deep as I could see, with pallets upon pallets of half pound blocks of butter. To the horror of the goods in staff the delivery man was unloading these and creating a new EC butter mountain right there in the hospital basement.



Needless to say, this was not what I had expected. It seems the description given to me by facilities ("box of butter - individual servings") had been reinterpreted by a keen new sales clerk as "box of butter – half pound blocks" and because I had not provided product codes, or any other supporting information, no one had queried it.

The story ends with me getting the goods returned, the goods-in manager having a cup of tea and a lie down to recover, the delivery driver laughing all the way back to the supplier and the rest of the purchasing team ensuring I never forgot about my butter mountain.

The moral of the story is, if you don't want to be a "patsy" (ouch!) you "butter" (groan!) make sure you use a good description and the correct product code when ordering goods.

Mark Fisher
Corporate Procurement Unit

Support Services Review

Procurement Update

As part of Norfolk County Council's Efficiency Programme to deliver better services and cost savings of £30m over 3 years, a project is underway to review the way we undertake procurement across the authority, including the establishment of Category Management.

Category Management is an approach that focuses on optimising the procurement of a group of inter-related goods & services. Each category usually has a dedicated team working with customers and suppliers to deliver added value solutions and procurement efficiencies. Responsibility for customer relationships, market intelligence and supplier/contract management rests with each category team.



Category Management is not about who buys the goods and services, how they are bought or how they are accounted for. Categories are created from goods and services that have:

- ◇ Similar supply sources;
- ◇ Similar production processes;
- ◇ Similar internal use;
- ◇ Similar material content/complexity;
- ◇ Similar specification;
- ◇ Similar product technology;
- ◇ Similar market dynamics

In 2008, analysis was undertaken to look at the way we procure now. The analysis indicated that the authority needed to strengthen internal procurement processes and controls, to lay a solid foundation for the subsequent introduction of Category Management. This was agreed by the Support Services Review Programme Board who directed the project team to produce a business case outlining the required changes.

The first step in this process has been completed – a series of 5 service specific workshops to:

Understand the problems faced by users of the current procurement processes, controls and systems;

Identify the 'must have' operating requirements for each service, that the new approach to procurement must support;

Gather views from those that use the existing processes on how procurement in NCC can be improved.

The project team is grateful to the support given by those involved in this important process.

The next step, in April, will be to pull all this information together to start to design the new approach to procurement.

In order to ensure the continued involvement of staff in the design of the new procurement service, a Project Board with representation from each service has been set up and meets for the first time in April.

Procurement in History

The Building and Launch of the Vasa

On 10th August 1628 the *Vasa*, the newly built, most expensive and largest warship of the Swedish fleet, was prepared for launch. The ship had been commissioned by the Swedish King Gustavus II Adolphus and the launch was to take place in Stockholm.

For the first part of the launch the ship was towed from the shore. The ship was still not in totally open water but in the shelter of cliffs at the harbour's perimeter. When the ship passed the last of the cliffs and headed seaward the Captain ordered the sails to be set.



At this point a slight south-westerly wind arose. What happened next was described in the Council of the Realm's subsequent letter to the King. Apparently the *Vasa* "... immediately began to heel over hard to the lee side; she righted herself slightly again until she approached Bechholmen, where she heeled right over and water gushed in through the gun ports until she slowly went to the bottom under sail, pennants and all."¹ The ship had barely managed to sail for more than a mile on it's maiden voyage. There were 125 people on board the ship and it is estimated that somewhere between 30-50 people died when the ship sunk³.

So, what went wrong?

Well, it might be more apt to say what went right, as subsequent investigations proved that the commissioning and the building of the ship were a catalogue of errors.

The list below indicates just some of the reasons why the disaster occurred:-

- The responsibility for building the ship was given to the Dutch Master Shipwright Henrik Hybertson. Believe it or not, it was accepted shipbuilding practice (at the time) that the design of ships basically relied on the knowledge, experience and skills of the shipwright – there were no engineering drawings made or written mathematical calculations to use as guidelines.
- The building contract specification only gave details of the required length and width of the ship, all other dimensions and aspects of design would be down to the shipwright to determine.
- The King demanded several changes to the specification, including the dimensions of the ship, after construction had already started.
- In 1627 the original shipwright died after a long illness. The two shipbuilders who took over responsibility for the work had no detailed records of the project, thus far, to work from.
- The amount of ordnance (*guns/cannons to you and me*) the ship was to carry was determined after construction had started and not incorporated as part of the original design. The total ordnance was over 70 tons and required a third gun deck to be built, in addition to the one enclosed and one open gun deck that formed part of Hybertson's original build. This made the ship top-heavy.

- Because Sweden was at war with other European countries, King Gustavus II Adolphus insisted that the Vasa be ready (ahead of schedule) by July 25 1628.
- In early summer 1628 a stability test of the Vasa was conducted by an Admiral of the Swedish Navy. Neither of the two shipbuilders who took over the project, after Hybertson's death, were present at the stability test. The stability test, which involved 30 men running from side to side of the ship, had to be halted as the ship was in imminent danger of capsizing.
- The shipbuilders were not notified of the results of the stability test.
- In addition to the ordnance and people on board for the launch, the ship was also weighed down by over 500 sculptures and 200 carved ornaments, the sole purpose of which was to make the ship look impressive. This increased the top-heavy nature of the ship.



There were a number of occasions throughout the Vasa building project where warnings were given by people with good experience of ships and seafaring. For example, a Botswain Matsson, who witnessed the disastrous stability test stated that the ship was...."too narrow at the bottom and lacked enough belly"⁴. But for a number of reasons, not least of which was the pressure being exerted by the King, such warnings were not heeded.

Relevance to modern Procurement Projects

Although the launch of the Vasa took place over 380 years ago, the problems with the project are just as relevant to today's procurement projects. The mistakes that were made are the kind of errors that can still occur in any project through lack of preparation, lack of project management and allowing external pressures to detrimentally interfere with the project. The story highlights a number of factors that are vital to the success of any large scale project, such as: -

- ◇ The need for good communications between all parties involved.
- ◇ The need for a clear written specification of the purpose of the project.
- ◇ The need to establish, from the beginning, the decision making process and who has overall authority for the project.
- ◇ The need for a structured timetable and an agreed process of "change-management."
- ◇ The need for a detailed and continuous record of what happens during the life of a project.
- ◇ ...and probably most important of all, the need to listen to those with the necessary knowledge, skills and experience and not allowing major changes to be made by people with little or no understanding of what those changes involve, and what the consequences of such changes may be.

The Vasa was eventually recovered from the sea-bed in 1961 and can now be seen at the Vasa museum in Stockholm.

Stuart Hutchinson
Corporate Procurement Unit

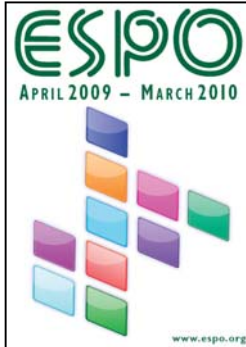
¹ - Source - From a case study originally prepared from public records by Professor R.O.Mason, of Southern Methodist University, Dallas, USA.

² - Source - www.vasamuseet.se Vasa Museum Stockholm

³ - Ibid.

⁴ - Source - see footnote 1.

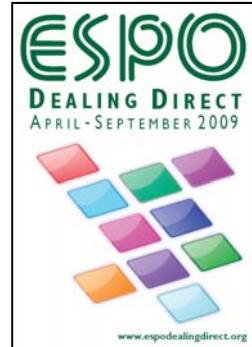
New ESPO Catalogues



Have you got yours yet? New catalogues have been distributed direct to all users this year and all schools. If you have not received your catalogues please contact ESPO Marketing Services on 0116 265 7927 quoting your Delivery Point Number. This is also the number to call if you require additional catalogues.

The Dealing Direct catalogue takes a different format this year, it includes a greater range of contracts but should be used in conjunction with

the new and improved website www.espodealingdirect.org Only ESPO customers can register and use the site which will give you up to date pricing and contract information.



Washroom Services

Following a recent tender exercise conducted by ESPO the supply and servicing of Sanitary bins, swabs and dressings bins etc (Washroom Services Contract 239) has been extended to include Initial Washroom Solutions at very competitive prices. The previous suppliers PHS Group and Cannon Hygiene Ltd are still on contract. Users are recommended to check recent invoices to confirm they are being charged at the ESPO contract rates as a number of customers signed up for services prior to the ESPO contract being in place so considerable savings can be achieved by switching across. The contract pricing can be checked by registering at www.espodealingdirect.org or by contacting your ESPO Norfolk Account Manager, Peter Legind.

Books 20% off at Waterstones!

The ESPO contract 376E allows ESPO customers to secure 20% off all books and a discount off a range of other products from Waterstones. For customers in Norfolk the branch in Royal Arcade Norwich handles all orders and arranges delivery to you. Full details can be found at www.espodealingdirect.org and orders can be placed direct with the Norwich store enquiries@norwich.waterstones.com or 01603 632426 Fax 01603 761693 Contact: Ben Miller



Telephony Services

(Lower Price phone calls and Line Rental)

When ESPO contract 7 expired last year it was duly re-tendered with the contract being awarded to Uniworld Communications. Additional savings of over 30% were achieved on call charges compared with the previous contract and lower prices on line rental too.

Customers who are still using Cable and Wireless are recommended to switch across to the new Uniworld contract by contacting Helen Wilkinson on 07920 134165 or helen.wilkinson@uniworld.co.uk and quoting ESPO contract 7.

Customers who have never changed supplier or who are using another provider are also recommended to contact Helen and request a bill comparison to show the savings that can be achieved. By using the ESPO contract you have the security of dealing with an approved company on contract and adding your purchasing power to the contract which in turn adds value to the contract, resulting in greater long term savings for all users.



Refuse Collection

When was the last time you reviewed all the products you do not buy from ESPO and all the contracts you use that are not ESPO contracts? In the current financial climate you could save a considerable amount of money by reviewing your purchasing and taking advantage of FREE advice from ESPO. Why not give it a try? Phone your Account Manager on 07787 128778

The current contract is due to expire shortly and a new contract awarded towards the end of May. We are unable to say at the moment who will be awarded the contract as the full tender process has to be completed to ensure the process is fully compliant. However if you would like to details sent to you as soon as they are available please register your interest with Jonathan Lisle at ESPO j.lisle@espo.org or check on the Dealing Direct Website www.espodealingdirect.org

Please Remember:

ESPO is a non profit organisation.

ESPO is part owned by Norfolk County Council.

ESPO is run to serve its members and users.

ESPO is your resource, use it to save money and get advice.

ESPO has a General Catalogue, and Dealing Direct Catalogue, Art & Design, Sport & Leisure, Early Learning, and Sustainable Products catalogue. This will be joined later in the year by a Site Managers Catalogue. All catalogues can be ordered on 0116 265 7927

Peter A J Legind
ESPO Norfolk Account Manager, 07787 128778

Did you know?

Some little known facts about iProc

Michael Caine is purported to have said¹...“Not a lot of people know that!” Well...

Did you know – that the value of requisitions raised through iProc in 08/09 has now reached **£103.95m** breaking the £100m mark for the first time (07/08 reached £89m)

Did you know – that the number of iProc requisitioners (including approvers) now exceeds **2,000**

Did you know – there are **over 60** Departmental Buyers

Did you know – the number of requisitions raised 08/09 stands at **47,834** (07/08 reached 42,774)

Did you know – the number of PO's created in 08/09 stands at **44,815** (07/08 reached 40,621)

Did you know – PO savings generated using iProc for 08/09 stands at **£80,903.38**

Estimated unit process saving for iProc £1.81 per transaction

Well if you didn't know that, here's a few more things you might find interesting about iProc....

Conceptual Achievements

iProc has introduced:

- ◇ tighter financial control at earliest point (by comparison to coding grids)
- ◇ commitment accounting
- ◇ electronic despatch of purchase orders
- ◇ 3-way matching (purchase order/receipt/invoice) therefore tighter controls on NCC spend
- ◇ invoice hold resolution, which helps improve payment performance KPIs
- ◇ improved supplier setup process

iProc has improved:

- ◇ tracking of PO's & highlights non delivery
- ◇ lead time in PO's reaching suppliers, thus quicker turnaround
- ◇ audit trail of purchase to payment process
- ◇ management info
 - * supplier spend & volume analysis
 - * supplier & commodity activity analysis
 - * contract spend analysis
- ◇ finance officer/procurement officer relationship
- ◇ departmental collaboration via:
 - * i-Proc focus groups
 - * iProc smart form ordering templates
 - * iProc shared catalogue ordering
 - * Identifying contract opportunities

Alan Chappell
Corporate Procurement Unit

¹Or was it Peter Sellers while doing an impression of Michael Caine? (And does anybody care either way – Ed)

We are “plumb” delighted!

During the summer of 2007, Trading Standards installed a plumbed-in water chiller and filter unit at their Kings Lynn office, under the ESPO Greencare H2O contract. Previously they had used a bottled water dispenser to provide drinking water for the 15 or so staff at the King’s Lynn office.



Feedback from the office staff suggests they are pleased with the quality of water provided by the new unit, and have found the convenience of always having cooled drinking water to hand a real bonus.

Trading Standards were conscious of the environmental impact of using a bottled water dispenser and this was the main driver for the change, so being able to use a mains supply for water was a substantial benefit.

Since the installation, Trading Standards have undertaken a cost benefit analysis of using this water filter system for the 08-09 service period. They were somewhat astonished to discover that their costs had halved since the installation. Brian Chatten of Trading Standards said...“Previously we were spending approx £400 per annum on bottled water at the Kings Lynn office. The current annual service charge for the water unit is £205. As this is a small office, we were only really expecting to break even on the costs.”

Brian, who instigated the change to filtered water, went on to say that Trading Standards were...“very pleased that something that was originally undertaken for its environmental benefits has also proved to be a cost saving to the service. The plumbed-in water dispenser at our County Hall Office caters for about 60 people - just think of the benefits we are getting there!”

Emergency Stationery

Run out of something and need it in a hurry?

Need an item of stationery that ESPO don’t stock?

Then you need contract 281 which is held by Norwich Office Supplies.

The contract **“is for Emergency Supplies of Stationery only”** and the discounts quoted on the Dealing Direct website are off Norwich Office Supplies catalogue and not the ESPO catalogue. However the contract has been fully tendered ensuring you are using a compliant contract and achieving competitive prices rather than ringing up another supplier and getting charged the prices that they feel that they can charge you.

Previous Competition Results

Issue 20 (Winter 2008/9)

Holiday Inn Norwich City competition - The CPU mailbox was inundated with a veritable dearth of entries for this competition. Not one single entry was received by the deadline. Hard to believe that nobody wanted to take advantage of the overnight stay at this luxury hotel in Carrow Road - which could be arranged on a match day if desired, which would have given the winners a superb view of the match from their hotel room. Perhaps that was what put people off (only joking).

Perhaps it was the phrase that your procurement or purchasing story/entry should be...."no more than 500 words"...that caused the problem. But that was only intended as a *maximum* limit, so entries with only 20, 30 or 40 words would all qualify as being no more than 500 words. Given the lack of any other entries, if somebody had posted an entry that just stated.... "I bought a car once"....they would have been guaranteed to win. Ah well, we live and learn as they say. We will try to make entry requirements more specific for future competitions.



Vaguely Procurement Related Quiz - This proved more popular and a good number of entries were received from various teams within NCC and the wider Purchasing Power readership.

The first correct entry out of the hat was from the staff of Fleggburgh Primary School who can be seen here receiving their prize of two large tins of chocs.

Celebrity Interview – Howard Jones

After a string of hits in the 1980's, Howard joined NCC as External Funding Manager in 2002 and has now settled down to a post in the NCC Department of Finance as Tax Manager (...is anybody still buying this celebrity interview lark – Ed). Howard and his colleagues in the Strategic Funding & Technical Team are the resident tax experts within NCC and Howard also specialises in VAT and assisting departments with finding out about grants for a range of projects. In fact there are a number of procurement related aspects in Howard's job role.

When Howard first joined NCC he was heavily involved in PFI Projects, including the Norwich Area Schools PFI project, which he says..." was particularly satisfying as it is quite unusual for an Accountant to have such tangible outcome from their involvement in a project, and now there are six schools in and around Norwich which I am very proud of."

As mentioned, another aspect of Howard's role involves identifying possible grants for various NCC projects sometimes directly but mainly by setting-up staff from departments so that they can look for potential grant opportunities. This is done via a system called "Grant-Finder" which is a web-based database that allows users to search for up to date funding opportunities, check requirements to obtain funding etc.

Of the projects that Howard has been directly involved in obtaining grant funding, the Cultural Services Museum Project was a particular highlight. “With a very enthusiastic team from the Museums Service, we were able to overcome a number of knock-backs and obtain several million pounds of funding from the EU on a matched-funding basis. This was used to assist substantial improvement projects at five County Council museums as well as other local museums not run by NCC”.

On the VAT side of things, Howard often assists departments with VAT related questions arising from the services they procure. He said...“although the Council can reclaim most VAT it pays, there are some areas where VAT can be an issue. On a small scale, it can be what to do if a supplier won’t supply a VAT invoice. More significant VAT planning can be useful where NCC employs charitable organisations to provide welfare services – particularly where NCC also provides grants to those organisations – to make sure that VAT is not being “lost” along the way. Howard’s VAT expertise also comes into play in construction projects...”where third-parties are partnering NCC or where future income such as rent is part of the project funding model, it is necessary to clearly establish VAT risks before the work commences – and to establish the effect on NCC’s overall VAT position. As with many things, if we are clear as to what we are doing and why, the VAT outcome will usually not cause a problem, but it is one of the many things which should be considered before contracts are signed.”

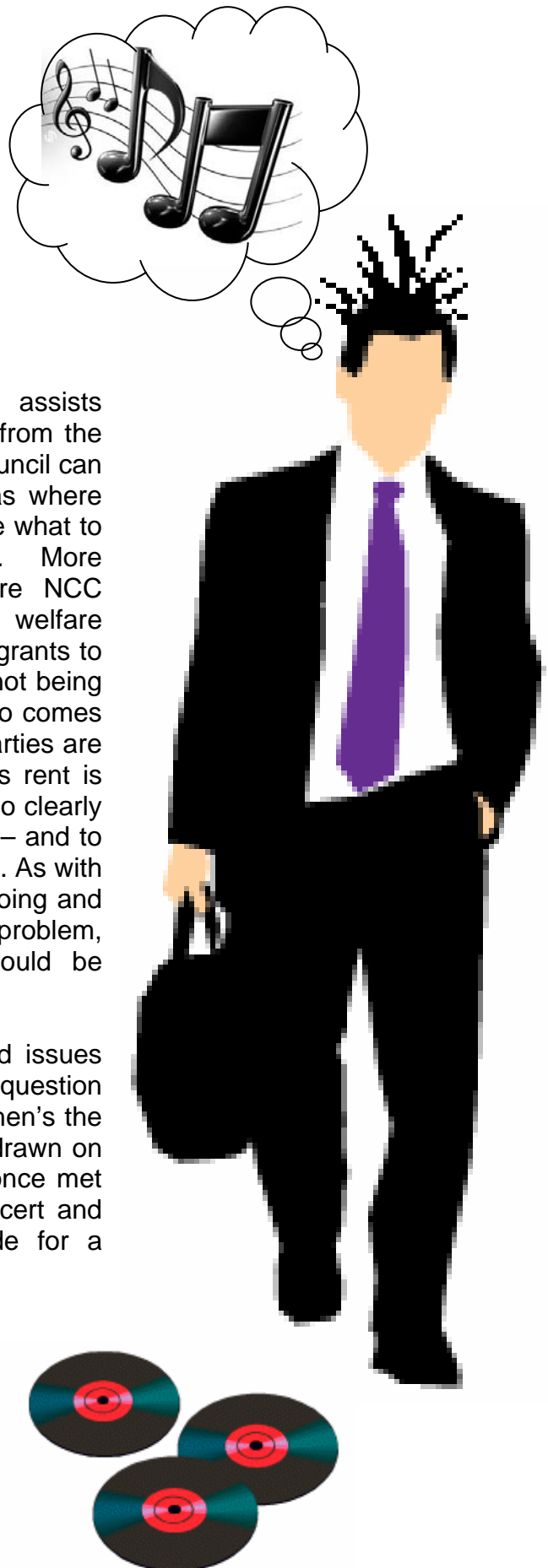
Well, enough of the various procurement-related issues that Howard gets involved with these days, the question our readers will no doubt be dying to ask is...”When’s the comeback tour”? Our interviewee refuses to be drawn on the matter but does add the true story that he once met the celebrity Howard Jones backstage at a concert and obtained his autograph. That must have made for a slightly strange encounter: –

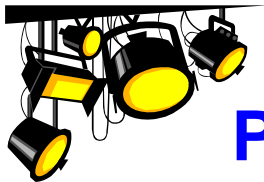
“Mr Jones can I have your autograph please”

“Sure, who’s it for”

“Howard Jones”

Thanks for the interview Howard.





Even More Vaguely Procurement Related Quiz

Lights! Cameras!...Action!

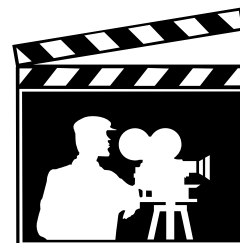
Undaunted by the fact that we may have already stretched the concept of a procurement related quiz to breaking point; here is another one.

The abbreviations below represent film titles that have a slight connection (very slight in most cases) to the subject of procurement. To help you come up with the answers we have given you clues by both indicating the star/s, or the director of the film concerned and the date the film was first released.

For example: AFOD Director: Sergio Leone (1964) would be - A Fistful of Dollars
As before, there are some old and new films as answers and entries should be from a working group, team or section. There is a prize of two large tin of chocs for the winning team or section. Your list of answers should be e-mailed to cpu@norfolk.gov.uk by 29/05/09, with "Procurement Film Quiz" in the subject line. Your e-mail should also state which working group/team you represent and the staff members involved in the entry. The winner will be randomly chosen from all the correct entries received by the closing date.

Once again, the films listed do not reflect the cinematic tastes of the compilers of Purchasing Power...to be honest it is getting more and more difficult to find that procurement link, after all "Procurement" and "Purchasing" aren't exactly the most over-populated of film genres. You should see some of the suggestions we rejected..."Star Trek – The Wrath of Coin"... indeed.

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 1) TMP | Tom Hanks & Shelley Long |
| 2) TC | Morgan Freeman & John Cussack |
| 3) TCOM | Director: Martin Scorsese (1986) |
| 4) WS | Michael Douglas & Charlie Sheen |
| 5) TP | Eddy Murphy/ Dan Ackroyd/Jamie Lee Curtis |
| 6) MDB | Director C. Eastwood (2004) |
| 7) TMPN | Gregory Peck (<i>this is a very old one</i>) |
| 8) PFH | Steve Martin/Bernadette Peters/Christopher Walken |
| 9) TDC | Director: Peter Greenaway (1982) |
| 10) PIF | Kevin Spacey & Helen Hunt |



If you would like this newsletter in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language, please contact the Department of Finance on 01603 223488 (minicom 223833) and we will do our best to help.

