

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 11TH SEPTEMBER, 2006

REPORT ON: ESTABLISHMENT OF JOINT WORKING ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN DUNDEE AND ABERDEEN PUBLIC ANALYST LABORATORIES

REPORT BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (SUPPORT SERVICES)

REPORT NO: 541-2006

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This Report seeks approval to enter into discussions regarding the establishment of joint working arrangements between Dundee and Aberdeen Public Analyst laboratories.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended:-

(i) that discussions on joint working between the Public Analyst Laboratories in Dundee and Aberdeen be entered into with the aim of introducing formalised arrangements with effect from 1st April 2007, and

(ii) that the Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and the Assistant Chief Executive (Management) consult with the relevant trade unions regarding these proposals.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Efficiency savings will be realised helping to secure the future viability of both laboratories.

4.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None

6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1 There are currently two Public Analyst laboratories serving the northeast of Scotland. These are based in Dundee and Aberdeen and are operated by the two city authorities. As well as the two cities, services are provided to Aberdeenshire, Moray, Orkney Islands, Angus, Perth and Kinross and Fife Council areas.

- 6.6 It is the opinion of the heads of the Dundee and Aberdeen laboratories that there would be merit in considering alternative ways in which the services required of the laboratories may be provided in a more cost-effective manner.

7.0 POTENTIAL JOINT WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

- 7.1 With analytical chemistry and microbiology becoming steadily more complex and the expectations of the general public over the safety of their food and their environment becoming higher it is the opinion of the heads of the two laboratories that working in a co-operative manner so as to establish centres of expertise and eliminate duplication

of effort could achieve considerable enhancements to the range of services provided within current resources.

- 7.2 Currently each of the laboratories provides a comprehensive service to the local authorities served. As a necessity this means that many types of analysis are provided at each site.
- 7.3 In the opinion of the heads of the laboratories a rationalisation of services would be achievable between the Dundee and Aberdeen laboratories due to their similarity in size and their relative proximity. Apart from a small core of services (mainly microbiological, because of the need to examine samples within a short time of receipt) very few analyses would require to be offered on both sites.
- 7.4 Although rationalisation of services would not result in any immediate significant cash savings the avoidance of the need for duplication of the purchase of expensive scientific equipment would result in longer-term savings. Furthermore, the rationalisation of services would allow for the introduction of more efficient working practices releasing resources for the provision of an enhanced level of service, as is required from a Public Analyst laboratory of the 21st century.

8.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 All local authorities are being charged with ensuring that they achieve "Best Value". A more rationalised approach to providing a modern public analyst service would assist in that process.
- 8.2 Good working relationships are already well established between the two laboratories and the size and scope of both laboratories as well as their geographical position and that of their client authorities lends itself to forming closer collaboration.
- 8.3 It will be more cost effective not to duplicate the provision of sophisticated scientific equipment in both laboratories. The opportunity also exists to develop specialisms in each laboratory with the ultimate aim of the elimination of duplication of effort as far as this is possible.
- 8.4 Cost savings would be realised in terms of staff, equipment, training, maintenance of Quality systems and accreditation, laboratory supplies etc., and in the medium to longer term improvements in service provision, efficiency of service and financial benefits are anticipated.
- 8.5 A formal Minute of Agreement would need to be put in place which would detail the operation of the joint working arrangements as well as the financial arrangements etc
- 8.6 A Report will be brought to Committee no later than January 2007 setting out detailed proposals for approval.

9.0 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Finance), and the Assistant Chief Executive (Management) have been consulted on this report and the relevant Trade Unions will be consulted.

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 None

Signed **PATRICIA MCILQUHAM**
Depute Chief Executive (Support Services)

Date 4th September 2006

