

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 12 MARCH 2007

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

REPORT BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (SUPPORT SERVICES)

REPORT NO: 194-2007

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This Report seeks approval for the establishment of joint working arrangements between Dundee Scientific Services and Aberdeen Public Analyst laboratory.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that joint working arrangements between Dundee Scientific Services and Aberdeen Public Analyst Laboratory be established with effect from 1st May 2007.
- 2.2 It is recommended that the Public Analysts / Official Agricultural Analysts employed by Aberdeen City Council are appointed by Dundee City Council to carry out the statutory functions under the Food Safety Act 1990 and The Agriculture Act 1970.
- 2.3 It is recommended that a combined budget for the joint service is established for financial year 2008/2009. Financial year 2007/2008 will be a shadow year with the two budgets operating separately.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The budget for the joint service should largely reflect the cost of the current two laboratories. In the short term there will be no increases in expenditure or immediate cash savings to the client authorities. Benefits in the short term will be realised by efficiencies of service.
- 3.2 In the medium to longer term, once there is a greater rationalisation of services there will be savings from creating economies of scale, non duplication of expensive sophisticated equipment, reduction in proficiency testing scheme participation and operation of a unified quality system.

4.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None

6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1 Reference is made to Article IX of the Minute of Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on 11 September 2006 (Report No 541-2006 refers) when the Committee agreed to discussions on joint working between the Public Analyst Laboratories in Dundee and Aberdeen with the aim of introducing formalised arrangements with effect from 1 April 2007.
- 6.2 Discussions have taken place since and a pilot exercise involving the transferring of samples between the two laboratories has been in operation since October 2006. This pilot has been used to identify any operational difficulties and is on a work-neutral basis i.e. the work transferred into the Dundee laboratory has been matched by the amount of work transferred out to Aberdeen.
- 6.3 Following the discussions and the pilot exercise it is the view of both Public Analysts that a joint working arrangement would be to the mutual benefit of both laboratories and the local authorities served by them and that a formalised arrangement should be agreed to take effect from April 2007.

7.0 JOINT WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

- 7.1 One of the major driving forces in establishing a joint working arrangement is to provide a more cost-effective service to the client authorities as well as increasing the scope of service offered.
- 7.2 To allow the statutory functions to operate more cost effectively it is essential that the two Public Analysts / Official Agricultural Analysts employed by Dundee Scientific Services should be appointed to act as Public Analyst and Official Agricultural Analyst for Aberdeen City Council and the other local authorities served by that laboratory. Conversely the two Public Analysts / Official Agricultural Analysts employed by Aberdeen City Council should be appointed to serve as Public Analyst and Official Agricultural Analyst for Dundee City Council and the local authorities served by Dundee Scientific Services.
- 7.3 Dundee Scientific Services currently operates under a Minute of Agreement with its partner local authorities, and this details the operation and financial arrangements of the service provided. Aberdeen City Council Laboratory has a less formal arrangement based on Service Level Agreements with the local authorities served by that laboratory.
- 7.4 In order for a formal arrangement to be put in place a Minute of Agreement between Aberdeen City Council and Dundee City Council will be required to detail the operation of the joint working arrangements.
- 7.5 The current funding arrangements are different for both laboratories. Currently the local authorities served by the Aberdeen laboratory pay an agreed annual sum based on head of population served with no restriction on the number of samples that may be submitted. The partner authorities of Dundee Scientific Services also pay an agreed sum based on population, but have a restriction on the number of samples submitted by allocating a number of workload units to each type of sample submitted.
- 7.6 The Public Analysts in charge of both laboratories recognise that the system currently in place in the Dundee laboratory provides a more transparent charging regime. It is proposed therefore that the Aberdeen laboratory adopt the Dundee charging system with effect from financial year 2008/09; for financial year 2007/08 the current charging systems will be retained in each laboratory.

8.0 **CONSULTATION**

8.1 The Chief Executive, the Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and the Assistant Chief Executive (Management) have been consulted .

9.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

9.1 None.

Patricia McIlquham
Depute Chief Executive (Support Services)

5 March 2007