

1st October 2012**Agenda Item 11****REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR, JOINT COMMISSIONING, QUALITY AND
BUSINESS CHANGE****PROGRESS REPORT ON SHERWOOD INDUSTRIES AND THE COUNTY
HORTICULTURE AND WORK TRAINING SERVICE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update on the progress made for the redeployment of staff from Sherwood Industries and progress on the closure of the site.
2. To provide an update on the progress of the project to restructure and rationalise the County Horticulture and Work Training service.

Information and Advice

3. In February 2012, Members approved the proposal to close Sherwood Industries but at the same time gave a commitment to ensuring that all the staff wishing to maintain their employment with the County Council would be supported to do so.
4. A proposal to restructure the County Horticulture and Work Training service was also approved.

Sherwood Industries Staff Group

5. Following approval of the proposal to close Sherwood Industries, new orders for furniture ceased to be taken at the end of February 2012. The majority of the manufacturing processes to fulfil outstanding orders were completed by the end of May and the remaining staff group stayed on site to support the activity required around mandatory stocktaking and general tidying up. At this time, work was underway to release staff who wished to take voluntary redundancy and redeployment opportunities were being sought for the staff who had requested this. As staff numbers reduced, it was not possible to provide appropriate supervision to the remaining staff across the whole of the site. A decision was taken to cease activity on the site with effect from 29th June 2012 and to identify temporary supernumerary placements for those remaining staff members who at that time had not been matched to a new post.
6. Sherwood Industries employed 43 staff in February 2012, 29 of whom were disabled workers on the Work Choice programme. In brief, the current position is detailed below:

- 16 staff members have taken voluntary redundancy
 - 10 staff members have been confirmed in alternative permanent posts within the Council
 - 5 staff members are undertaking their trial period in alternative permanent posts within the Council
 - 10 staff members have been placed in temporary supernumerary posts within the Council
 - 2 staff members are absent from work due to ill health and are being supported through the absence management process.
7. With regards to the 10 staff members that are on temporary supernumerary placements, work is on-going to find them a permanent redeployment opportunity. Each staff member has retained the services of a named human resources Officer to support them in addition to the assistance offered from supported employment line management. The situation changes on a day-by-day basis as opportunities become available and a number of staff who are working in supernumerary placements are waiting for a meeting date to be arranged, or for the outcome of a meeting, with an appointing officer. Continued funding is being made available to support the supernumerary placements.

Disposal of Sherwood Industries Assets

8. It was identified that some assets e.g. pallet trucks, hand tools, fork-lift truck, could be re-used elsewhere in the County Council and the majority of these assets have now been released to other departments. Vehicles have also been released back to the Corporate Fleet for re-use within the County Council.
9. Following the announcement of the closure of Sherwood Industries, the County Council was contacted by a number of interested external organisations about aspects of the land, property, machinery and intellectual property. One of these organisations also expressed an interest in offering employment to some of the Sherwood Industries staff.
10. In early June, the Corporate Procurement Team arranged for three independent valuers to visit Sherwood Industries to value the factory assets (machinery, stock, intellectual property). This exercise gave the Council a market value for the assets.
11. Once the value of the assets was identified, an exercise was conducted via Source Nottinghamshire to explore expressions of interest from any companies interested in acquiring some or all of the manufacturing assets from Sherwood Industries that were also interested in offering employment opportunities for some of the remaining staff at Sherwood Industries. Two companies have submitted an expression of interest and these are currently in the process of being considered with the support of legal services and the Corporate Procurement Team.
12. It is proposed that, subject to the outcome of the discussions with these two companies, any remaining machinery which is identified as having a market value will be considered for auctioning.

13. Responsibility for the premises passed to the County Council's nominated property officer on 29th June. The Corporate Property Team is currently considering options for the re-use of the buildings by the County Council.

County Horticulture and Work Training Service User Group

14. The proposal to restructure the County Horticulture and Work Training service was predicated on the cessation of the service at the Sherwood Pines and Worksop sites. The two sites have now been closed and the service continues to operate from the Brooke Farm, Skegby and Balderton sites.
15. All six of the service users who were in receipt of a horticultural training service at the Sherwood Pines site are now receiving a service either from the Skegby site or from the Balderton site. These moves were completed by the end of May. No service users had been in receipt of a service from the Worksop site.

County Horticulture and Work Training Staff Group

16. Once the service users had moved to their new bases, the service was able to undertake its staffing restructure with the reduction of 7.65 fte posts. The restructuring was completed by the end of June through vacancy management and voluntary redundancies with the exception of one disabled employee who has been found a redeployment opportunity within the County Council.
17. Through the enabling process at County Horticulture and Work Training, redeployment opportunities have been provided to three of the staff from Sherwood Industries.

Disposal of County Horticulture and Work Training Surplus Assets

18. Nottinghamshire County Council leases the Sherwood Pines site from the Forestry Commission who has agreed to let the County Council surrender the lease without any penalty.
19. The Sherwood Forest Trust with whom the County Council had a service level agreement to run the tree nursery would like to continue a project on the site with an alternative provider. The terms of any new lease arrangement would be between the Forestry Commission and the Sherwood Forest Trust or their new provider only. The Trust has asked if the County Council will consider gifting some of the assets on site (portacabin and polytunnel) to help them or their new provider establish a project. The County Council does not require these assets and indeed their removal would incur costs greater than their value. As a new provider has not yet been identified by the Forestry Commission, the County Council may consider giving these assets to the Forestry Commission itself and surrender the lease in return for a County Council commitment to make an unconditional payment to cover site clearance costs should this be required in the future. This is estimated to be £15,000 and, subject to approval, will be covered by site clearance costs already accounted for in the transitional budget.
20. The Corporate Property Team has been advised that the field at Worksop is not required by the Council.

Reason/s for Recommendations

21. This report is for information only and there are no recommendations made.

Statutory and Policy Implications

22. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

1). It is recommended that the Members note the content of the report and in particular the progress made to find alternative employment for those staff that have requested redeployment.

CAROLINE BARIA

Service Director, Joint Commissioning, Quality and Business Change

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Jennifer Allen

Tel: (0115) 977 2502

Email: jennifer.allen@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (LMc 24/08/2012)

23. The report is for noting only.

Financial Comments (RWK 13/09/2012)

24. There are no additional financial implications arising from the proposals and recommendations detailed in the report. Budget allocations for all costs and savings detailed in the report have already been included in the Committee's 2012/13 revenue budget.

Background Papers

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D for the Local Government Act 1972.

- Reports to Full Council on 22nd September 2011 and 23rd February 2012: Proposal to Change the County Council's Supported Employment Approach and Practice.
- Equality Impact Assessment.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected: All.

ASCH 47