



Thurrock Council- Fleet Management

An APSE Associate worked as Interim Fleet Manager at Thurrock Council, where he provided expert public sector transport knowledge and hands-on support to the council after it had submitted a successful tender to bring the refuse and recycling collection service back in-house. Being awarded the tender the Council faced the enormous challenge of implementing an effective and efficient waste collection service whilst at the same time making sure all support services were in place to deliver an improved service to residents and businesses of the borough. This was to have a major impact on fleet services both in terms of the procurement and on-going maintenance of an additional 30 refuse collection vehicles.

Objectives:

- Develop the needs of the new premises to accommodate the new fleet service and ensure a smooth relocation of the service
- Project manage the design of the new facility with the Council's project team.
- Develop the existing fleet management team into a cohesive and much improved service.

Outcomes:

- Savings of £700,000 over five years after a decision to replace all spot hired vehicles with outright purchases following a detailed cost analysis.
- All vehicles and high value items of plant had Road Angel GPS trackers fitted enabling real time activity to be measured improving efficiency.
- 10 year vehicle replacement programme produced and implemented.
- A new service partnership agreement (SPA) designed to enhance the services provided to customers and outline customer responsibilities.

Fleet Management has been recognised as a major contributor in supporting additional vehicles alongside continuing to provide what is regarded as an extremely efficient service to existing customers. However, at that time the existing vehicle and repair facility was located in a small two-bay workshop in the existing overcrowded depot. Thurrock Council has a reputation for its 'can-do' culture and therefore developed short-term emergency third party repair and maintenance support from local suppliers, whilst making plans to develop and increase the in-house repair and maintenance capacity.

Faced with these challenges, and energised by the underlying need to produce efficiencies, the Environment Department Management Team made the decision to restructure and expand the fleet service operation. The Council's in-house project management team, were tasked with the design of the new facility. However, the project team required the expertise of an experienced transport professional to develop the needs of the new premises to accommodate the new service. The APSE Associate was able to provide the much needed expertise to relocate the

service and provide essential project management skills to reshape and develop the existing fleet management team into a cohesive and much improved service.

As can be seen by the inserted pictures the transformation from the old to the new site is remarkable. The refurbishment of the Council’s obsolete civic amenities site in West Thurrock was recognised as the answer to accommodate the expanding fleet management service.



A detailed cost analysis of existing Fleet practices was undertaken and the decision to replace all spot hired vehicles with outright purchase commenced and when completed will realise significant savings of £700,000 over a five year period.

To further drive efficiencies within the fleet, all vehicles and high value items of plant had Road Angel GPS trackers fitted. Consequently, the vehicle’s activities are monitored in real time and usage trends identified. This has already improved efficiencies throughout the Council. An example of this has been the rescheduling of mechanical sweeper routes to improve performance whilst reducing duplication and waste of resources.

Additionally, the data from the tracker system has been used to improve the efficiency of the waste collection teams. The service specific weekly usage and exception reports produced for fleet customers are an invaluable tool in the Council’s drive to reduce waste and improve efficiencies.

In the past 8 months the fleet team has worked with existing customers to understand their vehicle needs and a ten year vehicle replacement programme has been produced and implemented. A new agreed service partnership agreement (SPA) was designed to enhance the services provided to customers whilst at the same time outlining customer responsibilities. Due to these and many other initiatives during 2012, the Council was a finalist in APSE’s annual awards for the best and most improved transport and vehicle maintenance performer – an accolade they are keen to improve on during 2013.

