



SFS – GOING BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY IN OLDHAM

SFS's track record within the field of customer retention bears testimony to being prepared to go that extra mile - a commercial quality that many organisations profess to deliver on, whereas in reality this is seldom the case.

It is a quality that long standing partners, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, is quick to endorse. As Pat Marples, Group Manager Transport comments: "We believe that the relationship we enjoy with SFS is a true benchmark partnership within our industry. It is one in which both parties have worked extremely hard and which is underpinned by the highest levels of trust and confidence on both sides."

"Most recently, having worked closer together than at any point in our seven year association, we have called on the depth of expertise that SFS has to offer outside of the pure contract hire arena," she added.

A perfect example of this comes in the form of a recent in-depth appraisal that SFS undertook relating to the operational efficiency of the Council's own in-house workshops. Having deployed two members of staff to carry out what amounted to a thorough review of its operational structure, procedures and equipment, SFS presented the Council with a 100-page consultancy report that focused on the presentation of a number of recommendations as a means of delivering service and cost improvements.

As Pat Marples explains: "This was a truly consultative piece of work that SFS suggested we should consider instigating, and which was undertaken by them purely and simply as a means of adding further value to the partnership. Not only were we delighted by this gesture, we are about to roll out a number of the recommendations presented within their report.

"It is important to remember that not only does SFS operate its own workshop facilities, they also specialise in providing an increasing number of local authority and government partners with unprecedented levels of service and maintenance support. As such, their knowledge of this field is understandably substantial," she added.

SFS is also prepared to go that extra mile in other areas as well, and one of these relates to networking and the company's ability to act in the manner of a truly effective catalyst. Upon discovering that the Council was looking to review its stores and parts provision, SFS duly did what you would expect from a loyal partner and facilitated a meeting between Oldham and a specialist within this field. As a result, and having piloted a project in the first instance, Pat Marples is quick to point out that with the help of SFS once again, the Council this year alone stands to realise direct and indirect cost savings within this field amounting to £90,000!

"This is just one area where SFS has put the Council in contact with other organisations and, indeed, local authorities, and which has resulted in us being able to improve all aspects of the service provision that we are able to offer residents here in Oldham," injects Pat.

"They have also facilitated another meeting with their local authority partners at Barnet Borough Council in London, the purpose of which should help us to drive forward additional service improvements in the near future. Finally, it would be a miss of the Council not to disclose the fact that in 2006 SFS rebated £73,000 to Oldham Council as a share of savings that had been generated from the partnership," she added.

Whilst SFS has successfully expanded the levels of service provision that they provide to Oldham Borough Council, they remain equally committed to focusing on their core skill and that is ensuring the correct vehicles are specified for the task in hand. Indeed, this is yet another area of the partnership that Pat is equally enthusiastic about. In summation she states: "SFS will do whatever is needed to source the optimum vehicles for us, irrespective of use. They hunt the market and deploy a great deal of time and energy doing so and this is something we've appreciated since day one."

SFS's relationship with Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council dates back to April 2000, when the company was successful in supplying one of the largest RCV fleets on contract hire with a value of £3.2 million. Suffice to say that this initial RCV fleet has since been replaced by SFS in 2005 through the deployment of new, second generation vehicles.

In between times, SFS was also successful in securing a tender for the supply of a further 127 vehicles, 102 of which joined the fleet of First Choice Homes – an arms length management organisation of Oldham Council.

And whilst SFS continues to satisfy the Council's vehicle fleet requirements on an ongoing basis, the company has supplied a variety of vehicle types taking in RCVs, sweepers, top and skip loaders, vans, minibuses and Whale tankers.

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Head Office

Specialist Fleet Services Limited
Cheviot House 53 Sheep Street
Northampton NN1 2NE
Telephone: **01604 234601**
Fax: **01604 234921**
www.sfs.co.uk