



PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT

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Computer package to help local authorities

By ERNEST MCINTYRE

GOVERNMENT legislation is forcing Scottish regional and district councils to undertake the biggest administrative shake-up in their history.

For example the 1988 Local Government Act which starts to take effect this year compels every authority to put out several of its most important services to competitive tender.

Council departments have been warned that unless they can prove they are able to do a job more efficiently than an outside contractor, much of the work they now do will be privatised.

Compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) will cover such services as refuse collection, building cleaning, catering, ground maintenance, vehicle fleet management, sport and leisure. Property maintenance, housing management, highways and sewers are other sectors under threat.

Local authorities, frequently the biggest employers in their areas, fully

realise that unless they can put their own houses in order fast, the jobs of thousands of their present employees may be affected.

That is why councils are currently busy reviewing old-established working practices and seeking wherever possible new ways of increasing efficiency so that when the time comes for CCT their "in-house" bids will succeed.

Ways and means of solving many of the problems now confronting local councils will be discussed later this month at a conference in Strathclyde Region's council chamber at Elmbank Street, Glasgow. Invitations to attend are being extended to all likely to be involved in the coming revolution.

The conference has been organised by ROCC Computers, one of Britain's most progressive companies in innovative uses of

information technology, who for several years have been devising computer systems specially tailored to improve the cost effectiveness of many local authority services.

Two appropriate themes have been chosen for the conference — "Managing Change" and "Compulsory Competitive Tendering" — and both subjects will be discussed by experts and highlighted by special presentations and a host of demonstrations.

These will outline the latest developments in computerisation and their application to particular local authority services in such fields as vehicle fleet management, stock and stores control, executive information systems, office automation, processed mailing and more. Local authority videotex applications will also be featured.

The keynote address on "Managing Change" will be given by Mr Michael Aldrich who, as chairman and chief executive has been the main driving force behind ROCC

Computers progress to one of Britain's top independent manufacturers of advanced information technology systems.

An acknowledged international expert in his field, Mr Aldrich has almost 30 years' experience in the computer industry and has been personally responsible for the invention of important advances in information technology.

He was a member of the Prime Minister's Information Technology Advisory Panel from 1981-86 and an adviser to the Confederation of British Industries on information technology during 1982-83.

A presentation on "The Effects of Compulsory Competitive Tendering" will be given by Dr John Sewel of Aberdeen University who is also a former president of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Mr Barry Doddington, formerly of Hampshire County Council, will explain how computerisation made the operation of that authority's large fleet of vehicles and plant more efficient and profitable.

Mr Charles Harrigan, branch manager of ROCC Computers, Scotland, will outline to the conference his company's strategy for local authority direct service organisations.

At the firm's Scottish headquarters, Orchard Brae House, Queensferry Road, Edinburgh, Mr Harrigan explained: "We lead the UK market for systems specially designed for local government and financial services.

"It is not by accident that we are now able to offer the right equipment and packages to local authorities at this time of significant change.

"Mike Aldrich, our company chairman, anticipated that this was going to happen and some of the systems we can now offer have been specially developed over the past four or five years."

ROCC Computers, which is headquartered at Crawley, Sussex, has earned a respected reputation as a computer hardware and software supplier for almost 17 years.

During that time it has concentrated on building up a fast, efficient and courteous maintenance service controlling a force of 200 expert engineers stationed at strategic points throughout Britain.

It is a company well poised to assist local authorities in tackling the daunting challenges of compulsory competitive tendering that now have to be faced.

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Compatibility is a key benefit

THE UNIX "Open System" packages that ROCC Computers specially designed for computerising the operations of local government services have one great advantage — their compatibility with other systems.

ROCC hardware and software have been in the forefront of the present strong trend in information technology towards the uniform standards that are becoming increasingly demanded by computer users.

ROCC open systems can operate on their own or be linked with other installations. In this way they can integrate all into one complete system offering a wider exchange of available information.

This compatibility also means that authorities buying UNIX systems are saved the cost of replacing existing hardware and software which can continue to serve a useful purpose for a long time to come. They are also not bound to purchase from one supplier.

Easily transportable software can bring many benefits by eliminating the limitations of present equipment and transforming it into a versatile, flexible tool that will have much wider applications and opportuni-

ties for extended use and improved efficiency.

ROCC systems specially designed for local authorities cover most council services and their adoption has led to spectacular savings in costs.

The company's transport management system has already proved itself in its field and major organisations with very large fleets have reported annual savings approaching 20%. The system can therefore pay for itself in a very short time.

The ROCC direct labour organisation maintenance system is the culmination of three years of development work and consists of a suite of computer program modules which can either be installed in their "standard" form or tailored by ROCC to meet the specific requirements of an individual local authority.

Indeed, ROCC Computers' Bespoke Systems Group harnesses 20 years' experience in supplying specific solutions suited to particular companies and organisations — more than 1800 ROCC installations are currently in use.

The group offers its expertise in the specification, design, implementation and commissioning of complete hardware and software sys-

tems including any additional services such as training or overall project management.

By delegating the management of a complete project to ROCC, a client can receive the benefits of expert professional experience and be offered a variety of maintenance and support packages suitable for his own needs.

The group also offers its services on a consultancy basis or in the training of operational or maintenance staff in the use of any system installed.

One of the latest ROCC hardware/software offerings, Roccmail, is designed to take advantage of a new Post Office bulk mailing discount system, Mailsort, which comes into operation in March.

Mailsort requires the customer to undertake more detailed sorting than at present, but it offers much higher discounts than many existing arrangements. For example, a million items sorted can earn a discount up to 32%.

Roccmail can carry out all the addressing, sorting and mailbag requirements of Mailsort and print reports showing the cost of mailing as well.