

# Program Evaluation

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## Ottawa County Sentenced Work Abatement Program (SWAP)

June 2006



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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The Sentenced Work Abatement Program (SWAP) was created in 1991 to allow local units of government and non-profit agencies to employ minimum-security inmates for the purpose of performing work projects, all of which are located outside of the jail facility. The SWAP Program was later expanded to provide services within the jail facility utilizing female inmates.

Both male and female inmates that perform SWAP services receive a one day reduction in their jail sentence for every four days of SWAP service. The SWAP Program has not only been a benefit to the participating local units of government and non-profit agencies, but also to jail administrators who are able to accomplish certain administrative and operational tasks while inmates are working outside of the jail.

Thirteen local units of government and non-profit agencies currently contract for SWAP services. Surveys were distributed to these 13 organizations and all of them indicated that the program is “highly beneficial.” Nine (69.2%) of the agencies also indicated that they save money as a result of participating in the program. However, when asked whether or not they would continue to participate in the program if the hourly fee-for-service were to increase incrementally through 2008 to cover actual expenses, 6 (46.2%) indicated they would be only “somewhat likely” or “not likely” to continue contracting for services. Still, the increased fee would be significantly less than the minimum wage that would be paid by organizations to obtain the same services.

In 2005, a total of 74,450 hours of service were provided by 399 SWAP participants. The total cost to administer the program was \$371,896. Based on the total cost of the program, the actual cost per hour was \$5.00. Based on the average hourly fee-for-service that was charged to the participating agencies (\$4.12 per hour, including overtime fees) the program had a total net loss of \$65,162.

The SWAP Program’s present net operating loss will be significantly reduced in the next 3 years as a result of increases that will be occurring in the hourly fee-for-service rate currently being charged to organizations that participate in SWAP. Based on projected increases in the federal minimum wage rate, it will still be cost effective for these organizations to remain in this worthwhile Program.

## INTRODUCTION

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This report has been prepared to provide an overview of the Sentenced Work Abatement Program's (SWAP) benefits, drawbacks, and cost. Furthermore, it provides information about the satisfaction level of the organizations using the program. This report also provides an indication of whether organizations are willing to accept future rate increases to cover actual program expenses.

The SWAP Program is administered by one sergeant and seven correction officers<sup>1</sup>. The SWAP staff are responsible for communicating with each participating agency to ensure that services are completed in an acceptable manner and for maintaining and supervising the inmates while they are on work detail.

The program removes between 40 and 50 SWAP participants from the jail population each day, for several hours at a time, which enables jail staff to accomplish other operational and administrative duties. These other duties may include, but are not limited to, monitoring more serious offenders, assisting other jail staff with inmate screenings, coordinating alternative transportation needs for inmates, and the day-to-day facility operations. Participants can be selected to participate in SWAP by either a sentencing judge or the jail administrator. The sentencing judge, however, has the right to prohibit a participant from being placed in SWAP even if they are selected by the jail administrator. The eligibility criteria to participate in SWAP are provided below.

- Must be sentenced on all outstanding charges
- No convictions for violent offenses
- No prior history of resisting and opposing or fleeing<sup>2</sup> an officer
- Must not be considered an escape risk or risk to public safety
- Must sign an agreement to adhere to program requirements

In return for participating in SWAP, male offenders receive one reduced jail sentence day for every four days of work performed outside of the jail. Female SWAP participants earn the same reduction in jail sentence days by performing tasks within the correctional facility. According to the Sheriff's Department, female participants typically have not been assigned to perform work outside of the jail facility for safety and security reasons and to keep male and female inmates separated as much as possible. The Sheriff's Department has also indicated that maintaining consistency among the duties performed by male and female SWAP participants has historically enabled the program to maintain a more organized jail environment. It also helps to reduce the risk of inmates trading contraband and increases the ability of inmates to train new participants. Jail Administration continues to evaluate work opportunities for female inmates; however, work assignments and supervision remain a concern. Male participants represent approximately 90% of the total SWAP population and female participants represent approximately 10%.

The types of services provided by SWAP participants include painting, general maintenance, equipment installation, lawn care, general labor, and laundry services. The SWAP Program operates Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and on Saturdays as needed.

1. The sergeant involved in SWAP dedicates 50% of his time to the program; the seven correction officers dedicate 100% of their time to the program  
2. Over the last 3.5 years, 7 participants were caught fleeing the job site (i.e. "walkaways"). When a walkaway occurs, up to 6 Sheriff's deputies have typically spent 2 to 2.5 hours each searching for the participant.

**Table 1**

Between April and November six outdoor SWAP crews are needed on average each day. Four crews are utilized between December and March. Two additional crews are available as needed. Participation rates and the number of reduced jail days for 2004 and 2005 are provided in **Table 1**.

<b>SWAP Participation</b>		
	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
Total Number of SWAP Participants	414	399
Total Number of Reduced Jail Days	3,443	3,640
Average Number of Hours Worked Per Participant	n/a	186.6 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Calculated by dividing the total actual number of SWAP hours (74,450) in 2005 by the number of SWAP participants (399)

Source: Fiscal Services Department and SWAP Staff

Agency participation is generally promoted through word-of-mouth (there is no formal marketing and/or promotion of the program). Three of the current participating agencies have expressed an interest in increasing the present level of services they receive through SWAP.

The actual SWAP hours provided to each of the 13 participating agencies in 2005 as compared to their contracted hours is provided in **Table 2**. Overtime hours are charged to agencies if a SWAP crew provides more than 8 hours of service in one day or for services provided on Saturdays.

**Table 2**
**2005 SWAP Hours Provided To Local Agencies**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Regular Hours</b>	<b>Overtime Hours</b>	<b>Total Actual Hours</b>	<b>Total Contracted Hours</b>	<b>Total Difference Between Actual and Contracted Hours</b>
Allendale Charter Township	2,376	4	2,380	3,520	-1,140
Children's Resource Network	120	0	120	80	40
City of Coopersville <sup>1</sup>	2,411	77	2,488	3,000	-512
Georgetown Charter Township	7,507	0	7,507	6,552	955
Grand Haven <sup>2</sup>	23,252	3,510	26,762	28,112	-1,350
City of Holland	13,098	925	14,023	22,352	-8,329
City of Hudsonville	5,973	0	5,973	6,096	-123
Ottawa County Michigan Works!	792	0	792	672	120
Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission	8,839	0	8,839	11,312	-2,473
Spring Lake Township	2,009	0	2,009	2,880	-871
Village of Spring Lake	1,573	0	1,573	2,376	-803
City of Zeeland	1,984	0	1,984	2,992	-1,008
<b>Total</b>	<b>69,934</b>	<b>4516</b>	<b>74,450</b>	<b>89,944</b>	<b>-15,494</b>

<sup>1</sup> The City of Coopersville overtime hours were for Coopersville Public School Transportation

Source: Fiscal Services Department

<sup>2</sup> Grand Haven SWAP hours include services provided to both the Chamber of Commerce and Public Works

## **EVALUATION**

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The data used for this evaluation were obtained from a SWAP Survey (**Attachment A**) that was distributed to the 13 participating non-profit and governmental agencies in April 2006 and from program cost data obtained from the Fiscal Services Department.

### SWAP SURVEY

The SWAP Survey was developed to obtain feedback from participating non-profit and governmental agencies regarding a variety of program areas. More specifically, these agencies were questioned about program benefits and drawbacks, quality of services, cost savings resulting from the program, and future contracts.

The participating agencies in the SWAP Program are as follows:

Allendale Township	City of Hudsonville	Children's Resource Network
City of Coopersville	Spring Lake Township	Grand Haven Chamber of Commerce
Georgetown Township	Village of Spring Lake	Grand Haven Public Works
City of Holland	City of Zeeland	Ottawa County Michigan Works!
Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Department		

All of the 13 participating agencies completed the survey. Based on the survey results, all of the agencies indicated the program is "Highly Beneficial." Additionally, one of the agencies indicated that they had actually hired a former SWAP participant after their release from jail. However, 9 (69.2%) of the agencies indicated that they have had difficulty with a SWAP participant in the past.

Furthermore, 7 (53.8%) of the 13 agencies were "Very Likely" or "Likely" to continue to participate if the hourly fee-for-service were to increase incrementally through 2008, while 6 (46.2%) were "Somewhat Likely" or "Not Likely" to continue participating in the program. Nine (69.2%) of the agencies also indicated that they save money as a result of participating in the program. A table summarizing results of the entire survey is provided in **Attachment B**.

Several of the participating agencies also provided written comments related to the benefits and drawbacks of the program for their respective agencies/departments. A few of the benefits identified by the agencies included how they are able to get "large amounts of work completed in a timely manner" and that "additional people allow [the agency] to complete work that may not normally get finished." A few of the drawbacks identified by the agencies included issues with the quality of work being completed by SWAP participants and that sometimes the participants have unsatisfactory work habits and/or poor attitudes. A summary of the written comments (i.e. benefits and drawbacks) is provided in **Attachment C**.

The survey provided the agencies with several estimated rate increases that would have to be implemented to cover the actual cost of the SWAP Program through 2008. As of June 2006, the current fee for regular hourly service is \$4.00 per hour. According to the Fiscal Services Department, the hourly fee-for-service will need to increase to \$4.91 in July 2006. In 2007 and 2008, the hourly fee is projected to increase to \$5.11 and \$5.25, respectively.

## PROGRAM COST

The ability of the SWAP Program to be self-sustaining is an issue that has been discussed since its inception. According to a Board motion from October 1991 (**See Attachment D**), the program was supposed to be reviewed one year after its implementation to determine if the program could be “self-funding”. Although it appears the intent of the motion was to require the program to be self-sustaining, it isn’t explicitly stated. A document called a *Policy For SWAP* (date unknown) provided by the Sheriff’s Department (**See Attachment E**) also includes language similar to the language found in the Board Motion.

The hourly fee charged to agencies is based on the annual salary of SWAP staff and the total number of contractual service hours requested by the participating agencies. The current hourly rate charged to organizations is \$4.00 per hour and the overtime rate is currently \$6.00 per hour. Based on the projected increases in the program’s administrative costs, the hourly fee-for-service will need to increase incrementally over the next several years.

An overview of program costs, along with information about net operating gain/loss is provided in **Table 4**. Additionally, the projected fee-for-service rates and minimum-wage rates are included for comparative purposes. At present, the SWAP Program is not generating enough revenue to be self-sufficient, but the proposed future increases in the hourly fee-for-service rate would reduce the present level of operating losses being incurred.

After receiving the revenue paid by local units of government and non-profit agencies in the form of hourly fees, the net loss during 2005 to the County was \$65,162. The projected net loss is expected to decrease in 2006 to \$48,745; the net loss will decrease in 2007 to \$11,667; and will continue to decrease in 2008 to \$11,169.

The total cost to operate the SWAP Program during 2005 was \$371,896. This includes transportation costs (vehicle expenses). The projected cost to operate the SWAP Program will increase to \$437,496 in 2008 – a 17.6% increase over 2005 expenses.

The projected fee that will be charged to SWAP Agencies in 2008 will increase by 31% over the current rate of \$4.00 per hour to \$5.24 per hour. In order for the County to break-even in 2008, the projected fee would need to be \$5.38 per hour.

**Table 4**

	Actual Costs	Projected Costs			
	2005	2006 (Jan – Jun)	2006 (Jul – Dec)	2007	2008
<b>Program Expenses</b>					
Staff Salary <sup>1</sup>	\$360,384.00	\$199,846.00	\$199,846.00	\$415,905.00	\$425,984.00
Transportation <sup>2</sup>	\$16,194.00	\$8,097.00	\$8,097.00	\$16,194.00	\$16,194.00
Reduction In Jail Revenue <sup>3</sup>	\$12,394.80	\$6,197.40	\$6,197.40	\$12,394.80	\$12,394.80
Meal Expenses Saved <sup>4</sup>	(\$17,077.28)	(\$8,538.64)	(\$8,538.64)	(\$17,077.28)	(\$17,077.28)
<b>Total Program Expense</b>	<b>\$371,895.52</b>	<b>\$205,601.76</b>	<b>\$205,601.76</b>	<b>\$427,416.52</b>	<b>\$437,495.52</b>
Projected Fees For Service (Per Hour)	\$4.12 <sup>5</sup>	\$4.00 <sup>6</sup>	\$4.91 <sup>6</sup>	\$5.11 <sup>6</sup>	\$5.24 <sup>6</sup>
Contract Hours	74,450	40,680	40,680	81,360	81,360
<b>Total Revenue (From Fees) <sup>7</sup></b>	<b>\$306,734.00</b>	<b>\$162,720.00</b>	<b>\$199,738.80</b>	<b>\$415,749.60</b>	<b>\$426,326.40</b>
<b>Total Net Loss (Per Year) <sup>8</sup></b>	<b>(\$65,161.52)</b>	<b>(\$42,881.76)</b>	<b>(\$5,862.96)</b>	<b>(\$11,666.92)</b>	<b>(\$11,169.12)</b>
<b>Total Net Loss (Per Hour) <sup>9</sup></b>	<b>(\$0.88)</b>	<b>(\$1.05)</b>	<b>(\$0.14)</b>	<b>(\$0.14)</b>	<b>(\$0.14)</b>
<b>Break-Even Fees for Service (Per Hour)</b>	<b>\$5.00</b>	<b>\$5.05</b>	<b>\$5.05</b>	<b>\$5.25</b>	<b>\$5.38</b>
Federal Minimum Wage (Per Hour) <sup>10</sup>	\$5.15	\$5.59	\$7.54	\$7.76	\$8.03

<sup>1</sup> Includes Salary & Fringe (50% of Sergeant's time and 100% of correction officers' time)

<sup>2</sup> Based on actual vehicle cost incurred between January and May 2006 and extrapolated out on an annual basis

<sup>3</sup> The estimated reduction in jail revenue is a result of jail bed days being saved through SWAP; this cost is based on a 2006 collection rate for jail stays

<sup>4</sup> Meal savings calculation based on the average number of jail bed days saved in 2005 (3,443) as a result of SWAP

<sup>5</sup> Based on actual hours (74,450); includes overtime hours

<sup>6</sup> Based on projected fees for service as determined by Fiscal Services

<sup>7</sup> Per hour fee times the number of SWAP hours: Actual hours for 2005 (74,450); Projected cost based on contract hours 2006-2008 (81,360)

<sup>8</sup> Determined by subtracting the total program expense from the total revenue (from fees)

<sup>9</sup> Calculation determined by dividing the total net loss (per year) by the number of SWAP hours: actual hours in 2005 (74,450), contract hours in 2006-2008 (81,360)

<sup>10</sup> Includes FICA, workers compensation, and unemployment

Source: Fiscal Services Department

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The feedback received from local units of government and other non-profit agencies indicate the program provides a valuable service to these organizations. The Program also provides an internal benefit for jail employees who can perform extra administrative and operational duties when SWAP crews are out of the jail. Unfortunately, the actual amount of that benefit cannot be quantified at this time.

It appears from past Board of Commissioner actions it was their intent to make the SWAP Program self-sustaining. However, that objective was never implicitly stated and suggestions for future review of program costs appear to have been overlooked because they is no documentation to show that costs were ever analyzed.

In 2005, the SWAP Program resulted in a net financial loss to Ottawa County of \$65,162. However, the projected increases in the hourly fee-for-service should reduce the loss to approximately \$11,000 per year beginning in 2007.

Even though some of the participating agencies are not certain they will continue to utilize the program if the hourly fee-for-service increases, it is likely they will remain committed to the program once they recognize that program rates will still be substantially less than the federal minimum wage.

Although the SWAP Program will continue to operate with a net loss in future years, it is likely the size of the loss will be offset by the benefits gained by having SWAP participants out of jail so that other administrative and operational functions can be performed in their absence.

**Recommendation: Conduct a cost analysis each year to ensure the SWAP Program is either self-sustaining or in a position which does not require the County to fund an amount greater than \$20,000 in any fiscal year.**

Attachment A



OTTAWA COUNTY
SENTENCED WORK ABATEMENT PROGRAM (SWAP)
AGENCY SURVEY

1. Please rate how beneficial the SWAP Program is to your Agency/Local Unit of Government.
Very Beneficial Somewhat Beneficial Not Beneficial

2. Please list any benefits that your Agency/Local Unit of Government has experienced as a result of participating in SWAP:

Four horizontal lines for listing benefits.

3. Please list any drawbacks that your Agency/Local Unit of Government has experienced as a result of participating in SWAP:

Four horizontal lines for listing drawbacks.

4. Has your Agency/Local Unit of Government ever had any trouble with SWAP participants (i.e. walk-aways, unsatisfactory work habits, attitude, other.)?

Yes No

If yes, please specify type of trouble:

Four horizontal lines for specifying trouble.

5. Has your Agency/Local Unit of Government ever hired a former SWAP participant after their release from jail?

Yes No

6. Has anyone in your community ever hired a former SWAP participant as a result of the work they provided for your Agency/Local Unit of Government?

Yes No Don't Know

If yes, approximately how many former SWAP participants have been hired?

One horizontal line for number of participants.

7. Does your Agency/Local Unit of Government currently experience a cost savings as a result of utilizing SWAP services?

Yes No

8. In order to cover actual administrative costs of SWAP, all Agencies/Local Units of Government may experience a yearly increase in the hourly rate for SWAP services.

a. How likely is it that you will continue using the SWAP program if the cost for services were to increase this year from the current rate of \$4.00 per hour to \$4.75 per hour?

Very Likely Likely Somewhat Likely Not Likely

b. How likely is it that you will continue using the SWAP program if the cost for services were to increase to an estimated \$5.00 per hour in 2007?

Very Likely Likely Somewhat Likely Not Likely

c. How likely is it that you will continue using the SWAP program if the cost for services were to increase to an estimated \$5.25 per hour in 2008?

Very Likely Likely Somewhat Likely Not Likely

9. Other Comments/Suggestions:

Four horizontal lines for other comments.

Name of Person Completing Survey:

Name of Agency/Local Unit of Government:

Thank you for completing the survey.

Please return the completed survey by April 21, 2006 to:

Ottawa County Planning and Grants Department
Attention: Shannon Vandermolen
12220 Fillmore St., Rm. 170, West Olive, MI 49460
Fax: (616) 738.4625

## Attachment B

### SWAP Survey Responses

	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Not Beneficial	
<b>How Beneficial Is The SWAP Program To Your Agency?</b>	100% (13)	0% (0)	0% (0)	
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	
<b>Has Your Agency Ever Had Any Trouble With A SWAP Participant?</b>	69.2% (9)	30.8% (4)	0% (0)	
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	
<b>Has Your Agency Ever Hired A Former SWAP Participant After Their Release From Jail?</b>	7.7% (1)	92.3% (12)	0% (0)	
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	
<b>Has Anyone In Your Community Ever Hired A Former SWAP Participant As A Result Of The Work They Provided For Your Agency?</b>	0% (0)	15.4% (2)	84.6% (11)	
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	
<b>Does Your Agency Currently Experience A Cost Savings As A Result Of Utilizing The SWAP Program?</b>	69.2% (9)	15.4% (2)	15.4% (2)	
	<b>Very Likely</b>	<b>Likely</b>	<b>Somewhat Likely</b>	<b>Not Likely</b>
<b>How Likely Is It That Your Agency Will Continue Using The SWAP Program If The Cost For Services Were To Increase This Year From The Current Rate Of \$4.00 Per Hour To \$4.75 Per Hour?</b>	61.5% (8)	38.5% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)
	<b>Very Likely</b>	<b>Likely</b>	<b>Somewhat Likely</b>	<b>Not Likely</b>
<b>How Likely Is It That Your Agency Will Continue Using The SWAP Program If The Cost For Services Were To Increase To An Estimated \$5.00 Per Hour In 2007?</b>	30.8% (4)	53.8% (7)	15.4% (2)	0% (0)
	<b>Very Likely</b>	<b>Likely</b>	<b>Somewhat Likely</b>	<b>Not Likely</b>
<b>How Likely Is It That Your Agency Will Continue Using The SWAP Program If The Cost For Services Were To Increase To An Estimated \$5.25 Per Hour In 2008?</b>	23.1% (3)	30.8% (4)	30.8% (4)	15.4% (2)

Source: Participating SWAP Agencies

## Attachment C

### Please List Any Benefits That Your Agency Has Experienced As A Result Of Participating In SWAP:

#### Summary Of Comments

*Cost savings of approximately \$78,000 - \$120,000 when compared to the cost of the full time staff equivalent needed to perform the same task*

*There are social benefits that are not quantifiable*

*There is a possible reduction in vandalism [because participants may have] a small amount of ownership*

*The City has a goal to "Put the Shine" back in the town. The SWAP crew assists in this effort with the added person/power*

*SWAP has helped us keep our pathway system well trimmed and trash free, among other projects*

*Additional tasks are completed without use of city employee overtime*

*Larger [SWAP] groups allow for larger projects to be completed*

*Reliable. [The Program] does a great job at cleaning up after the craft fair*

*Has allowed the township to accomplish many labor intensive jobs without hiring part or full time help. These also are jobs that are hard to fill (i.e. trimming, headstones, litter pick-up)*

*Get large amounts of work completed in a timely manner*

*Crews can do a variety of work without complaint*

*Additional people allow us to complete work that may not normally get finished*

*New paint on our walls; seriously, the men did a great job*

*SWAP able to perform menial tasks; full time employees can concentrate on more important jobs. Crews are able to perform a wide variety of work*

*Pick-up trash along the road; put down bark/mulch; mow the cemetery*

*Our agency would be unable to continue our senior nutrition program without the SWAP crews. The process is labor intensive and we lack staff resources to carry out these tasks*

*Because of the multitude of labor intensive tasks we have, SWAP is a very appropriate work force for us. To replace them would be a significant cost each year*

*There would be benefits to having full time well-trained staff instead of using inmate labor; however, currently it makes fiscal sense to continue with and support the SWAP program*

*Also, there is a significant public relations aspect to use of inmates to perform labor intensive tasks. We receive many comments from the general public in support of using inmates for this type of work*

*Important that Sheriff officer is "visible" to residents. Great program, we hope it continues*

*I believe this is a very beneficial program to both the inmates and the communities that utilize SWAP*

*Without SWAP we wouldn't be able to get the City looking as beautiful as it does; an absolute must for us*

## Attachment C

### Please List Any Drawbacks/Types of Trouble That Your Agency Has Experienced As A Result Of Participating In SWAP:

#### Summary Of Comments

*Various: image; walk-aways; have had to redo some work in the past*

*SWAP supervisor does not watch the crew very closely*

*The presence of inmates at Hagar Park makes some parents uncomfortable*

*Frequent changing of crew composition for security reasons. Also, the quality of supervision provided by supervising deputy greatly influences the value of SWAP (current supervisor is very good).*

*Occasional complaints and/or concerns from citizens and union*

*Sometimes that SWAP crews can be hard on the tools*

*Our order [for SWAP] was mixed up with [another order] but had it straightened up*

*Weather and scheduling at same time*

*No major issues in the 8 years we have used the program. Occasional small things which were immediately taken care of by the SWAP officer*

*We regularly have poor work habits and poor attitudes. Often this is the result of the crew turnover needed for security. We also experience more tool breakage with SWAP than with other staff*

*One worker had a "tourism sucks" t-shirt*

*Walk-aways and unsatisfactory work habits*

*We had one walk-away years ago. Problem was solved quickly*

*Had to send some back because they did not want to work*

*Over the years there have been a few walk-aways and some "attitude." The problems were dealt with quickly and to everyone's satisfaction*

*One walk-away in six years and unsatisfactory work habits*

*Once in a while an inmate comes in with a poor attitude. SWAP officers have been very good at handling it*

*Minor problem quickly resolved by deputy officer*

*Some bad attitudes with the inmates which is expected to some degree, but this is always dealt with promptly by the SWAP officer*

*Care must be taken not to price yourself out of the market*

*Large [cost] increase for 2006. Starting date for 2006 depends on our budget*