

# Case study

## The London Borough of Southwark



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Making Southwark 'Cleaner and Greener' is one of the core objectives of the Community Strategy - the council and community's shared vision for the future of the borough. This objective is then written into the council's own corporate plan, and subsequently into departmental business plans.

It is this top level council objective that has driven the development of environmental policies and initiatives across the council's services. Procurement is one of the 12 key areas for action set out in the council's sustainability policy. Following this, the corporate sustainable procurement strategy was in place at the beginning of 2006. This strategy sets out how to address environmental issues throughout the procurement process.

### Sustainable procurement

Implementation of the strategy initially focused on quick wins within the council's corporate contracts. The council's policy is to purchase 100% recycled paper (using 100% post consumer waste and chlorine free bleaching). The council's corporate stationery supplier has been instructed to default all orders for A4 and A3 copier paper to 100% recycled. By improving internal compliance with corporate contracts, the recycled share of purchases in the category 'paper and envelopes' increased from 66% to 81% by the first quarter of 2006.

Because of the persistent myths concerning the poor quality of some recycled products, the council believes it is important to dispel these with reliable evidence. It was clear that switching to using remanufactured toner cartridges would secure both cost and environmental benefits for the council. A report of a recent trial of remanufactured toners (by Recycle Western Riverside) provided support for making this change, along with securing assurance from the council's IT contractor that such cartridges would be supported. The corporate IT consumables supplier has now been instructed to default all orders for printer cartridges to supply remanufactured equivalents (where available). It is estimated that this will result in an annual saving of around £24,000.

The council has purchased electricity generated from renewable energy sources for many years. 9 out of 19 of the council's largest (100kw) sites are currently supplied via 100% green electricity contracts. All of the council's street lighting, and 43 medium sized sites are supplied by electricity sourced from good quality combined heat and power (CHP) generation.

Southwark council began tackling environmental impacts of its vehicle fleet through the EU funded ZEUS project in 1997. This project saw the introduction of electric and liquid petroleum gas (LPG) fuelled vehicles, along with the infrastructure necessary to support them. Southwark introduced the first publicly available LPG station in the UK.

Southwark council's ongoing commitment to reducing the environmental impacts of its fleet was formalised in the corporate fuel policy (agreed in 2004). The policy provides a framework for ensuring that the most environmentally preferable vehicle fuel is specified for each operational need. This includes the adoption of the latest European standards for each vehicle type, and using LPG and biodiesel fuels.

Southwark's fleet currently comprises around 340 vehicles, of these:

- over 150 are fuelled with LPG
- 85 vehicles running on a 20% blend of bio-diesel with diesel
- a further 6 refuse collection vehicles are being trialled with 20% biodiesel
- trialling one vehicle on 100% pure plant oil, tests will move on to a further four vehicles

## Results

It is estimated that the annual use of biodiesel, at around 300,000 litres/year has resulted in a reduction of 160 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Local air quality will be improved with a reduction in key pollutants - particulates reduced by 10%, carbon monoxide by 13% and unburnt hydrocarbons by 21%. The council's achievements were recognised in being awarded the Greenfleet 'London Local Authority of the Year' in 2005.

The vehicle procurement policy is only part of the council's commitment to greening its fleet. The council has provided all HGV drivers with intensive training regarding environmental impacts and awareness. In addition, all HGVs are fitted with live time tracking, two way communication to reduce unnecessary journeys for missed collections.

## The Future

The council's sustainable procurement strategy is now being integrated into the general procurement guidance provided to officers. Already, major procurements (over EU thresholds) must set out what the environmental impacts are, and how these will be minimised. The wider, social and economic aspects of sustainable procurement are also starting to be addressed. The council has established a 'market development' initiative to support local businesses (eg helping them to meet the criteria for contracts within the borough). The council is also working toward becoming a Fair Trade borough with Fair Trade refreshments available at council meetings.

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