

Reusing workwear in Herning

Municipality of Herning, Denmark

Background

The Municipality of Herning is located in the Danish region of Midtjylland, in the heart of the Jutland peninsula.

Herning is a member of the Danish [Partnership on GPP](#) - a coalition of governmental bodies committed to making extra efforts in partnership with other organisations to reduce the environmental impact from their procurement actions. The Partnership involves nine municipalities, two regions and a water supply company. Its members represent about 20% of the annual public procurement spend in Denmark¹.

In 2014, as part of the [Rethink Business](#) project (financed by the Region of Midtjylland and the European Regional Development Fund), Herning decided to begin trialling circular economy ideas in some of its operations, such as in their purchasing contracts for workwear.

Procurement objectives

Previously, all new employees of Herning's Technical Operations Department received brand new work clothes. These were then discarded regardless of quality once the person resigned (as the person's name was printed on the clothing) or when the textile service contract expired, often creating unnecessary waste. The Municipality had a rental agreement with a company who provided the workwear, including a wash and repair service.

With the new procurement however, the Municipality wished to find an innovative solution for reusing workwear it needed for staff. Herning set the following objectives for its next procurement²:

- To define operative and objective criteria for the reuse of work clothing;
- To adjust the current textile service contract model in a way that would allow for the new conditions;
- To find commercial recycling solutions for used work clothes.
- To develop a general guide for incorporating circularity criteria into public tenders in order to be used by other public entities.

Herning Municipality involved a number of parties in the tender preparation stage, including students from a local design school, and economic experts who helped with the economic analysis and the establishment of criteria for the recycling and disposal of used clothing. Staff from the Technical Operations Department were also involved to ensure that the quality and design of the clothing met the legal and practical requirements, and all other expectations for such clothing. In addition, the Municipality engaged in a market dialogue process with a number of enterprises from the textile, furniture and construction industries in order to also gain a better understanding of the potential issues which may exist in the reuse business.

A procurement procedure was launched in May 2015 and the contract was awarded in June 2015.



Image: Sacha Kohlmann / Flickr

1. Ministry of Environment and Food in Denmark: http://mfvm.dk/nyheder/nyhed/nyhed/jyske-storkommuner-saetter-turbo-paa-groen-omstilling/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=fvm_nyhedsmail&utm_campaign=jyske-storkommuner-stter-turbo-p-grn-omstilling&cHash=f9cdc525f85c21eae83de1ec865a588c

2. For more information, please see: <http://www.spcclearinghouse.org/c/5-sustainable-public-procurement/scp-initiatives/824-new-circular-business-models-focus-on-purchases-work-clothing-and-the-textile-service-industries-.html>

Criteria used

During the first phase of the project, a set of criteria for assessing the reusability of the work clothes was defined. The criteria were defined with the support of a group of employees from the Operations Department, which provided feedback about the use culture and attitudes towards used clothes, and some further insights from the [Danish Technological Institute](#).

The second phase involved introducing circular procurement aspects to the previous contract model, where clothes were discarded once the contract expired. The new contract would include the possibility of transferring used clothing, which were still in good condition, to the next contract.

Subject matter of the contract: Hiring and washing of workwear for the operations department and technical staff from schools and institutions of Herning Council.

Technical specifications:

Workwear covered by the contract included jackets, trousers, shirts, sweaters, fleece jackets, shorts and overalls.

In addition to the standard and safety work clothes requirements, the following requirements were issued for recycled workwear for the contractual period:

- Jackets, trousers, fleece jackets and overalls had to meet [EN ISO 20471](#) for high visibility clothing. A condition assessed as Class 3 in the criteria matrix (see link further below) should be achieved throughout the period of use.
- Accessories such as reflectors, zippers, buttons and velcro had to meet all safety requirements throughout the usage period. Repairs which were not visible were allowed for these elements.
- Clothing which had holes larger than three millimetres were not accepted, but could be repaired if all additional requirements were met.
- Employee names must be sewn or attached to the clothes in a way that made it possible for the bidder to eventually remove or replace the names.

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Award criteria: The tender was awarded on the basis of the lowest price.

Contract performance clauses: The supplier had to ensure that the workwear provided maintained a certain level of quality during the contractual period. This included performing regular checks on the clothes status based on specified quality standards. For this purpose, a [Matrix](#) with relevant criteria to assess the condition of the workwear and the necessary actions was provided.

Results

Since the contract was low-value, and had no cross-border interest, a negotiated public procurement procedure was started in May 2015, whereby two suppliers were approached, took part in the negotiation and presented their bids. The contract was awarded in June 2015 to one of the two suppliers and entered into operation in October of the same year. The contract can run for a maximum of three years, to ensure that the supplier has ample time to make up for the start up costs.

Bidders were asked to submit both lease and purchase prices which included a “new item” price and a depreciation percentage per week.

With this latest contract, Herning was given the possibility of purchasing the clothes (which were still qualitatively in order) when the contract ended, and thus were able to continue using them for subsequent workwear servicing contracts.

Savings of 6,700 euro were achieved for a 27,000 euro contract. In addition, a study on the potential economic and ecological impacts of reusing work clothes was conducted, which predicted savings of 1,011 tonnes of CO₂ over a four year period, only for the workwear used by Herring's Technical Operations Department, which has approximately 100 employees.

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Moreover, and as part of this initiative, Herring developed two guides:

- [Implementation Guide circular economy in public procurement](#)
- [A set of technical criteria for recycling and disposal of work clothes](#)

Environmental impacts

The main environmental impacts addressed in this tender are the use of toxic and hazardous substances in the production process for textiles and the generation of greenhouse gas emissions derived from the production of textiles. In addition, reusing work clothes that are in a good condition reduces waste.

Lessons learned

In order to come up with innovative ideas, analysing experiences from other cities, and also in other areas, proved to be a valuable starting point for the staff working on this particular procurement from Herring's Council.

Discussing the topic and maintaining a dialogue with important stakeholders from different areas before actually launching the procurement played a key role in achieving the desired result. Many useful ideas were put forward which had previously not been considered.

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For related information, please see [European GPP Criteria for Textiles](#) and the [Technical Background Report](#).