



THE LGIU E-GUIDE TO

Local Sustainable Procurement [→](#)

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1. Introduction

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Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable procurement is purchasing goods and services that have the most beneficial environmental, social and economic impact, and which avoids compromising future generations.

In our consumer greedy society, ensuring sustainable development is becoming increasingly urgent. We must change our habits by curbing our consumption and making informed and responsible choices about the products and goods we buy, to ensure resources for future generations. Making the best sustainable choices will help stimulate demand for recycled and sustainable goods.

Being a sustainable local authority is:

- leading by example, giving confidence to local residents that the environmental and social issues associated with the goods the council buys are properly managed
- building partnerships with suppliers to develop more sustainable supply chains for all the products local authorities procure
- ensuring food for schools and social services is fresh, seasonal, free from genetically modified organisms and where possible and available organic, free range and fair trade

- reducing the contribution to climate change by using low energy products, having energy efficient buildings and transport fleets and buying energy from renewable sources or installing microgeneration of energy
- reducing the use of natural resources by using recycled products
- ensuring that all wood and paper products come from either well-managed forests or recycled material
- ensuring that the chemical products used do not adversely affect the health of residents, staff or the environment.

Local authorities are large consumers and purchasers with significant purchasing power. They can have a real impact by purchasing responsibly, opting for goods with sustainable credentials, and by demanding goods with higher sustainability credentials through clear specifications. Procurement specifications should consider not only the source of the materials the product is made from and its longevity in the work place, but also its eventual redundancy and disposal. Writing a specification with this detail will mean examining the product's life cycle analysis.

Case study

Find out about London Borough of Camden's approach to sustainability



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2. Life cycle analysis

Life cycle analysis is a way of looking at a product from cradle to grave. It involves assessing the impact of the product on the natural environment, the natural resources it is made from, what it offers during its working life, whether it pollutes and finally its disposal. Considerations for disposal include whether any, or all, of the components can be recycled, whether special measures need to be taken for the disposal due to its toxicity and the time it takes to break down.

Consider a simple life cycle analysis of the cups your council uses for tea and coffee during its meetings. These may be plastic, paper or china. Both the disposable plastic and china cups are made from non-renewable raw materials, but although china cups may use more raw material and heat during production and are a heavier product to transport, they have the advantage of being cleaned and reused many times over, lasting for years. Paper cups are potentially from a renewable source, either sustainable forest or part recycled, but like plastic cups they are disposed after one use. Both the plastic and paper cups can be recycled but generally this is not the case, instead they end up in land fill. Even with this simple example you can get a feel for the complexities of examining a product cradle to grave and the sustainable choices that need to be made.

Case study

Find out about Plymouth City Council's approach to sustainability



3. Labelling

There are now many labels and logos to assist purchasers making an assessment of a product's life cycle. Environmentally friendly, low energy, 100 per cent recycled, non-toxic, organic, Tradecraft, cruelty free and from a sustainable source are terms the environmentally aware high street consumer may be looking for to help them make informed choices. Local authorities also need to consider these criteria when procuring goods and services.

Some food and drink products have labels which signify certification by a third party such as Fairtrade, the Soil Association, Organic Farmers and Growers, Irish Organic Farmers and Growers Association, Scottish Organic Producers Association and for wooden goods the Forest Stewardship Scheme (FSC). These recognised at-a-glance logos give reassurance and provide a quick understanding of the product's provenance.

It is a legal obligation for some products that use energy to display the European Community Energy Label. They mainly include white goods such as fridges, washing machines, electric ovens and air conditioners. The European Community Energy Label classifies the grade of energy efficiency, details of consumption and noise levels. The European Ecolabel logo may also appear on the Energy Label, indicating the product meets further strict environmental criteria.



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The Energy Star is a label for office equipment such as computers, printers, fax machines, copiers and scanners that meet or exceed energy efficiency guidelines. The scheme is voluntary, where organisations register suitable products with the European Commission.

Labelling varies and may only tell part of a product's story. Some logos are internal to the company and give their internal assessment of the product, so trust in the organisation is essential. Generally labels are useful for an at-a-glance guide but procurement officers need to examine the specification of the goods further, particularly for large purchases and contracts.

4. Corporate social responsibility

Local authorities have a corporate social responsibility to take forward the sustainability agenda and look after the well-being of their communities. Already local authorities have a duty to collect recyclable household waste, all the materials that are collected need to be reprocessed for reuse or be the raw material for new recycled products. Recycled products can only be viably manufactured if there is a market that is willing to purchase recycled goods. Local authorities can close the recycling loop by purchasing recycled goods and materials, stimulating and ensuring that there are enduring markets for recycled goods and materials.

So there are two clear elements for local authorities to consider: the life cycle of the products they buy, and closing the recycling loop by recycling products at the end of their life and by buying products which are made from recycled raw material.

Case study

Find out about the LGIU's approach to sustainability



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5. Ethical procurement

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An organisation which practices ethical procurement is one that ensures its trading practices are respectful of human rights, for example by having fair pay, avoiding exploitation, child labour and slave labour; respectful of animal rights; without harm to the environment; and being honest and fair in their business approach. As well as good practice internally, ethical organisations ensure that the companies they trade with also have an ethical approach.

Ethical procurement practices include:

- ensuring equal opportunities of services and employment
- allowing employer and manager discussions informally or through recognised trade unions
- compliance with health and safety regulations
- ensuring an open and transparent tender process
- ensuring fair and equitable standards for awarding contracts
- ensuring prompt and fair payment to suppliers.

Ethical procurement within local authorities is ensuring the local authority demonstrates ethical practices, and that its suppliers have ethical practices.

To identify ethical suppliers ask for documentation such as equal opportunities policies, environmental policies, purchasing and financial procedures, and look for standards such as:

- liP – Investors in People
- ISO 14001 – environment management systems
- SA8000 – Social Accountability 8000
- Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code
- Trade Union Recognition.

Case study

Find out about Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council's approach to sustainability



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6. Standards

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Standards are generally voluntary and are certified by an independent third party. By achieving a standard an organisation demonstrates publicly its commitment to the values it holds to be important.

liP – The Investors in People standard focuses on an organisations' commitment to improve by valuing staff. The standard certifies senior management's commitment to training and managing staff through a three stage business planning process:

- plan – developing strategies to improve the performance of the organisation
- do – taking action to improve the performance of the organisation
- review – evaluating the impact on the performance of the organisation.

ISO 14001 is a standard for an environmental management system from the international standards organisation. To reach the standard an organisation needs to:

- implement, maintain and improve an environmental management system
- demonstrate conformance
- ensure compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

SA8000 – Social Accountability 8000 standard is based on the principles of international human rights. It measures the performance of companies in eight key areas:

- child labour
- health and safety
- disciplinary practices
- compensation
- forced labour
- discrimination
- working hours
- free association and collective bargaining.

The Ethical Trading Initiative Base Code standard is for organisations who want to demonstrate to their customers that they meet international labour standards. The Code has nine clauses on staff working conditions:

- employment is freely chosen
- freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are respected
- working conditions are safe and hygienic
- child labour is not used
- living wages are paid
- working hours are not excessive
- no discrimination is practised
- regular employment is provided
- no harsh or inhumane treatment is allowed.

The Ethical Trading Initiative is an alliance of companies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and trade union organisations who work to ensure that the conditions of workers producing for the UK market meet international labour standards.

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7. UK policies

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The UK's national sustainable development strategy, Securing the Future, gave government's support for a much more proactive use of public procurement as a tool for sustainable development.

Local government procurement is presently being led by the National Procurement Strategy and the Gershon Efficiency Review, which takes into consideration sustainability, best value, e-government, equalities, health and safety, markets, joint working and workforce matters. Both the strategy and review have high expectations that savings can be made, qualitative service improvements achieved, and important sustainability targets progressed simultaneously.

The National Procurement Strategy for Local Government (2003-06) includes in its vision for local government procurement the aspiration that:

“By 2006 authorities will be realising social, economic, and environmental benefits for their communities through procurement activities, stimulating markets and using their buying power creatively to drive innovation in the design, construction and delivery of services.”

To support the implementation of the National Procurement Strategy and the delivery of council efficiency targets nine Regional Centres of Excellence (RCEs) have been established. The main roles for the RCEs include:

- acting as the first point of contact for local authorities in relation to the efficiency agenda

- coordinating and analysing data relating to local authority performance across the four workstreams to enable decision makers in authorities to understand the options for improved performance
- providing support, including identifying and bringing to bear available resources, to local authority-led projects designed to achieve efficiencies
- developing opportunities for shared working across local authorities and the wider public sector, involving, where appropriate, the private and the voluntary and community sectors
- coordinating the support for local authorities to ensure that the efforts of individual organisations support the needs of the region.

The regions and the host authorities are given in the table below:

Region	Host
North East	Gateshead
West Midlands	Worcestershire
South West	Dorset
North West	Tameside
South East	Kent
Yorkshire and Humberside	Leeds
East Midlands	Nottinghamshire
East of England	Norfolk
London	Association of London Government on behalf of the London Boroughs

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In addition to the centres of excellence there is a Sustainable Procurement Task Force set up to develop a National Action Plan for ensuring that public procurement contributes fully to sustainable development in the UK, reflecting the principles set out in the Sustainable Development Strategy and the existing EU, domestic and legal framework governing public procurement.

The Task Force Action Plan intends to set out how to:

- avoid adverse environmental impacts resulting from the way government assets are managed
- make more efficient use of public resources
- stimulate the market to innovate and to produce more cost effective and sustainable options for all purchasers
- set an example for business and the public and demonstrate that government and the wider public sector is serious about sustainable development.

Case study

Find out about Warwickshire County Council's approach to sustainability



8. Making it happen locally

Make a commitment

There is a set of steps you have to take to make sustainable procurement a reality. The first step is for you and your council to make a commitment to your residents. This can be through a policy statement or action in your community plan, corporate strategy, environment strategy or local agenda 21 strategy.

Your council could take the commitment a stage further and sign up to the Mayor's Green Procurement Code. The Mayor of London invites organisations to sign up to its Green Procurement Code. The Code operates at four levels of commitment. Organisations that sign up to the basic level agree to discuss the possibility of buying recycled products; at the highest level, the organisation agrees to set targets for green procurement. The overall aim of the code is to stimulate demand for recycled products and materials, creating a business solution to the waste problem. To find out more about the mayor's Green Procurement Code visit the website:

www.london.gov.uk/mayor/environment/waste/green_procurement_code

To ensure commitment is being driven you need a champion. Your champion must be passionate about sustainable procurement and prepared to embed sustainability into the whole procurement process. It is preferable to have both a lead elected member and a senior officer to champion procurement and work together to address the sustainability of the supply chain.

Steps to making it happen

1. Nominate both a senior officer and lead elected member as champions
2. Make a commitment
3. Have a plan to embed sustainable purchasing
4. Have the resources to embed sustainable purchasing
5. Write, in consultation, a sustainable purchasing policy
6. Write, in consultation, a 'Selling to the Council' guide to help stimulate supply
7. Write, in consultation, a procurement compact with the voluntary and community sector to deliver public services
8. Raise awareness amongst employees by organise projects and promotions on sustainable procurement
9. Train procurement staff to write specifications for sustainable goods
10. Train staff particularly to carry out sustainability audits
11. Meet with suppliers to discuss the options of available products and their impact environmentally, socially and economically
12. Raise awareness amongst suppliers of the Council's commitment
13. Set a local sustainability performance target
14. Monitor performance
15. Audit compliance with the sustainable purchasing policy
16. Update the sustainable purchasing policy at least every two years.

Devise a plan

Your champions need to prepare a plan to realise sustainable procurement and to ensure that purchasing processes further these aims. Part of this plan may include allocating additional resources for the purchase of goods that may cost more and for training and raising awareness amongst staff.

The next stage is to write your formal policy. Your policy needs to be written in consultation with officers and where possible suppliers. Bringing suppliers on board will help them to understand why your council is taking this approach and how they can help to source appropriate products.

Sustainability is a principle that should pervade procurement policies, alongside efficiency and value for money.

Procurement policies need to address sustainability in its widest sense and include environmental, social and economic considerations for the procurement of goods and services, their life cycle and the closing of the recycling loop. One way that this can be achieved is by undertaking a strategic environmental assessment of procurement policies in the same way the local development framework and transport plans are assessed.

Set performance targets

As part of your policy you may want to set indicators and targets to procure a certain percentage of your total expenditure on goods and materials that are sustainable. Suitable measures will need to be put in place to ensure each order can be identified as an order for a sustainable product.

Your champion will need to monitor targets on a regular basis. A standard approach is to collect indicator data monthly and report quarterly. You may feel it is too early to set targets, but simply monitoring the performance will give you an indication of the direction and speed of change.

Meet with your suppliers

Developing your relationship and working more closely with your suppliers will assist your smooth transition to procuring more sustainably. Officers will need to meet regularly with suppliers to discuss your future needs and expectations for sourcing goods, with higher environmental specifications and that can be disposed without harming the environment.

You will also want to know more about your suppliers, their ideals and how ethically they operate. Managing the change process with suppliers may be made easier by developing a 'Selling to the Council' guide that outlines your council's expectations in relation to the standards suppliers operate to: for example, their health and safety, equal opportunities and workforce policy. You may want to consider drawing up a list of companies you want to boycott due to the practices they operate.

As part of a holistic approach to sustainable purchasing, your council needs a diverse and competitive range of suppliers. You need to be proactive in developing supply chain partnerships with small firms, ethnic minority businesses, social enterprises and voluntary and community organisations. As part of the 'Selling to the Council' guide you may want a section which focuses on these suppliers and their delivery of goods and public services. You may already have a separate compact for procurement with the voluntary and community sector.

Raising awareness

Possibly most crucial to embedding sustainable procurement is raising awareness amongst staff and training staff who procure goods. Most local authorities have devolved functions for procurement with a large number of staff with varying responsibilities for procurement. You can ensure sustainability awareness remains high by issuing regular updates on products that are more sustainable, recent sustainable purchases, and having a diary of events such as future training, supplier chain development and finding the right product meetings. This will keep staff up-to-date with the latest products

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and in touch with businesses that supply the sorts of goods you are looking for.

For small and regular orders you may want to consider having a catalogue of your preferred product choices this gives a clear direction to staff who may only purchase as a small part of their job role, and have received little or no training to consider the most sustainable option.

Contract renewals provide an ideal opportunity for including sustainable criteria in specifications. Keep a list of contracts and the dates when they come up for renewal. Ensure that specifications for all new contracts are rewritten to take account of sustainability criteria.

Some contracts potentially have greater social, economic and environmental benefits and options for improving sustainability. If it is not possible to address all contracts, concentrate on the ones which will run over a longer period and have greatest opportunity for improving sustainability.

Procurement staff need to be trained and skilled in writing specifications which take account of sustainable factors, whilst still considering value for money and ensuring the product is suitable for its users. Requesting quotes for sustainable and non sustainable factors will give you an idea of cost differentials. However, if you request just sustainable factors you may find the market place will become more competitive in driving prices down.

The types of factors that are appropriate in a specification vary with each order and contract. The food contract for authorities with responsibilities for providing social care

and education is substantial. Specify fresh, seasonal fruit and vegetables. Freshness is important as some products may take days to travel from the area where they have been grown, freshness helps to limit unsustainable and excessive food miles. Specify no genetically modified foods. Although organic or free range food products are generally considered a luxury, you should consider selecting one product such as milk, bread or eggs to be supplied from an organic source.

Specify fairtrade products such as tea, coffee and biscuits for committee meetings and staff canteens. The Fairtrade Foundation exists to ensure a better deal for marginalised and disadvantaged third world producers by awarding the Fairtrade Mark to their products.

Specify recycled or reused materials, as this will minimise the use of virgin and non-renewable materials and maximise use of post-consumer materials. Products include photocopier paper, washroom products such as paper towels and toilet paper but also printer toner cartridges and road aggregate.

For timber and wooden products specify timber from a well-managed forest, the international Forest Stewardship Scheme (FSC) stamp of approval can give reassurance and avoids purchasing timber from destructive logging.

Avoid potentially hazardous products and chemicals such as cleaning materials that are toxic or ozone depleting. Specify non toxic and non polluting and biodegradable products instead.

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When energy contracts are renegotiated, specify costs for both green and brown energy. Take into consideration the savings to be made by avoiding the climate change levy if you opt for renewable energy. You may want to show that you have a commitment to renewable energy by purchasing all or a percentage of your energy supply from a renewable source.

When replacing electric and water consuming equipment, select replacements for their energy and water efficiency, such as Energy Star rated printers and photocopiers and efficient white goods with European ecolabels. When replacing boilers specify metering and monitoring equipment, it may cost more initially, but it will make it easy to identify changes in efficiency or leakages. Or better still consider replacing them with ground heat pumps. Request full operational and maintenance guidance to ensure equipment and buildings are used effectively and kept in good repair.

Specify long-life products that have durability and can be repaired and reused. Specify minimum packaging for safe handling of products. For end life and disposal specify products that can be disassembled and the parts recycled.

Maintain interest in contract renewals by making regular enquiries on improved specifications for current contract negotiations. Ask your internal audit to inspect purchases to see how well they meet compliance with the sustainable purchasing policy.

Continuous improvement

To maintain continuous development in sustainable procurement the work has to be kept up-to-date and in the minds of staff. You can keep the momentum going by updating the sustainable purchasing policy at least every two years.

Sustainability Guide Series

Local Sustainable Procurement is the fourth in a series of guides which focus on sustainability issues, and is the first available electronically. Two earlier guides in this series have touched on procurement in relation to waste in Rubbish to Resource and energy in Local Sustainable Energy.

Case study

Find out about Cambridge City Council's approach to sustainability



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Cambridge City Council have devolved procurement but are looking to be proactive about having a central steer on various commodities. They are working with suppliers on a catalogue of stationary goods, which are selected for their green credentials. Whilst they accept that budget holders have the ultimate say in what is purchased, they anticipate that the benefit in price from the call-off contract will be enough to convince staff to purchase from the catalogue and begin to green the supply chain.

They are also reviewing their Corporate Procurement in response to the National Procurement Strategy and producing a supplementary sustainable procurement guide.

Contact

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London Borough of Camden

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Camden is committed to sustainability and recruited a sustainable procurement manager to introduce sustainability into all its procurement contracts. One contract scheduled for renewal was the school meals contract which was also to be part of a best value review. Around the same time the London Development Agency asked Sustain to work with a London Borough seeking to integrate a greater proportion of sustainable food into school meals. Sustain approached Camden just as they were beginning their review and were therefore the ideal local authority partner.

The review included:

- considering the Soil Association 'Food for Life' targets designed to reform menus by making school meals 30 per cent organic, 50 per cent locally sourced and 75 per cent unprocessed
- taking account of the Primary Care Trusts recommendation that school meals reach nutrient based standards and are linked to school health promotion as described in the Hungry for Success report from the Scottish Executive Panel on school meals. The aim being, to provide a balanced diet containing less fat, sugar and salty foods and instead having more bread, cereals, other starchy foods, fruit and vegetables and being richer in minerals and vitamins
- meeting with catering providers with the aim of assessing their views and capacity on issues such as: provision of fresh, home-cooked food; purchase of organic and local food; transported meals; whole borough contracts versus smaller contracts, and staff training.

As a result of the review Camden developed a Standard for School Lunches which has three strands:

- guidance on menu planning and adopting a whole school meal approach
- nutrient standards for 5-11 year olds and 11-18 year olds
- Camden's School Meal Policy 'School Meals Service Objectives'.

The main contract objectives are:

- provision of high quality, healthy food: The school meal should be adequate in quality and quantity to be the main meal of the day and it should be based on a hot cooked meal service offering two main course choices. The main priority of the Council is that the menus and food products meet the nutrient based standards and quality standards in the specification
- Camden has a commitment to a high quality service based on fresh food, healthy choices and high nutritional standards. Camden would expect the fresh food to be cooked from scratch using high quality raw ingredients that are unprocessed and, where applicable, seasonal
- menu planning, food presentation and the dining room environment must enable and encourage children and young people to make healthy choices and to enjoy their lunch time experience. They should also reflect the diverse culture of pupils attending Camden schools
- the Council has a strong commitment to sustainable development, to improving and protecting the environment and to social justice. It has a policy preferentially to purchase products that are produced using sustainable methods and/or ethically traded.

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The new contract contains development targets for the introduction of organic or sustainable food ingredients over the life of the contract and as costs/resources allow:

- a motivated and valued workforce: Camden is committed to investing in its workforce and those that work for its contractors. The Council will expect the contractor to develop and provide training in food handling, production and service in healthy eating for all its employees. Staff should receive a reasonable rate of pay, which should be above the national minimum wage rate. All staff should feel an ownership of their area of work and be respected
- a whole school meal approach: The school meal service should be an integral part of the school day representing an educational and social occasion providing opportunities for learning experiences that reinforce messages about food and healthy eating. The contractor will be expected to work with the LEA and schools in ensuring that all catering staff and dining room supervisors are adequately trained in food and health to deliver this objective
- the Council expects to meet with the contractor on a regular basis to discuss all aspects of the service. The Council will expect the contractor to consult parents and consult and meet with the head-teachers and student councils as part of the whole school approach in delivering the service.

Camden asked tendering organisations to quote a range of prices for providing different amounts or types of both conventional and sustainable food such as conventional, free-range or organic eggs. From seven companies invited to tender four bids were received. Appraisal of the bids included a PCT Paediatric Dietician assessing the menus provided by contractors. From April 2006 Camden schools will be enjoying healthy, sustainable school meals.

Contact

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Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council

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Purchasing renewable energy is a priority in Gateshead's Local Agenda 21 Strategy. In 2003, when the council was looking to renew its electricity contracts, it collaborated with other councils in the region to invite tenders for the supply of renewable energy through the North Eastern Purchasing Organisation (NEPO), a consortium of 25 councils.

Only one supplier was able to tender on green energy and the premium on the price was negligible. As invoices show, renewable energy is exempt from the Climate Change Levy making a saving of 0.43 pence per unit of electricity. The saving from the Climate Change Levy means the overall cost per unit was a mere 0.02 pence more, which is a small price to pay when considering the environment. Gateshead now purchases 100 per cent of their electricity from renewable sources. Gateshead is one of twenty three councils who participate in the NEPO contract for electricity and almost all of these councils made the same decision.

Gateshead also worked with other councils to produce the NEPO catalogue which covers a huge range of consumable items that councils procure. NEPO recognises that councils have freedom of choice in the selection of products and that most councils have environmental policies. For this reason NEPO included a range of products which carry an environmental symbol signifying that they have been assessed as environmentally friendly or cause less harm to the environment. Products purchased by Gateshead carrying the environment symbol include commonly used items such as recycled photocopier paper, washroom products such as paper towels and toilet paper, and white goods with low energy star rating.

Contact

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The LGIU launched its corporate social responsibility programme two years ago and greening the office was a central element of the strategy. They already recycled paper and their empty toner cartridges, and used recycled paper for photocopying and printing, but realised this was only a beginning. Their approach has emphasised that a green purchasing strategy needs to be linked to actions to minimise the use of resources and that staff need to own and drive the changes.

Staff were asked for their priorities in greening the office. Their top recommendations were:

1. Immediately buy double sided printers
2. Have a green audit of the building looking particularly at light bulbs and thermostats
3. Look at catering and use of water
4. Green electricity to be considered as part of purchasing
5. Learning lunch to educate those staff that want it.

The LGIU contacted Envirowise (www.envirowise.gov.uk) who were able to assist with a green audit of the office and gave a lunchtime seminar to staff, at which staff were given Envirowise's excellent pamphlet – green efficiency.

The LGIU considered the investment cost of the double-sided printers and that found they would pay for themselves over 18 months by cutting the use of paper – so that was an easy decision. They introduced an email protocol that encourages staff not to print out emails and held an office stationery amnesty to recovered unused items which could be of use to other staff, so reducing their purchasing.

Placing thermostats on all radiators was considered but unfortunately proved uneconomical. However energy saving measures were taken by placing heat reflective panels behind the radiators and asking staff to switch off monitors and lights when they left the building. Electricity use is monitored and the LGIU have set targets for reducing electricity use. Discussions with their electricity provider to have renewable energy proved positive the LGIU now receive a percentage of electricity from renewable sources at no extra cost because of the climate levy reduction. The LGIU are currently investigating sensory lighting for common areas of the office and the purchase of more environmentally efficient florescent light bulbs.

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The LGIU explored installing piped cooled drinking water however it proved impossible to retrofit the building instead they changed their supplier of drinking water from Nestles to a more ethical provider. They also stopped providing plastic cups at drinking water dispensers and provided drinking glasses as an alternative for staff. Recycling was increased by removing individual's waste paper baskets and placing communal rubbish bins next to the paper recycling stations. Reinforcing the message to all staff remains critical and they have devised a green induction programme for new staff.

The LGIU have signed up to the mayor of London's green procurement code. They still believe there is more to be done so they are seeking help to audit of all of their current purchasing. Ultimately greening the office makes it more sustainable and saves money too.

Contact

Ines Newman
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www.lgiu.org.uk

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Plymouth is a unitary council with 60 primary and five secondary schools producing waste vegetable oil. In September 2005, the beginning of the school year, the council went into partnership with a local firm Plymouth Biofuels Ltd. Plymouth Biofuels have a school catering contract to collect the waste vegetable oil from Plymouth's school kitchens and give it a new lease of life by reprocessing it into transport fuel for cars and lorries.

The waste vegetable oil is converted by blending it with other oils and natural materials and producing a fuel, which works in most diesel cars and is also suitable for use in boats, ships and industrial heating. The technique is described as being more environmentally friendly than other larger scale methods of producing biofuels, which need complicated chemical processes and create wasteful by-products. Biofuel is not yet available at normal filling stations instead it is sold directly to local hauliers, bus companies and taxi drivers.

Plymouth is not content with just recycling the waste, they want to close the loop and help stimulate demand by using biofuel in their 400 strong vehicle fleet. They are currently working with manufacturers of their fleet vehicles on the details of their warranties, as they need to be confident that they can retain the warranty on vehicles before they convert their fleet to biofuel.

Contact

Stuart Busfield
Product Portfolio Manager
www.plymouth.gov.uk

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Warwickshire have shown real commitment towards achieving sustainable procurement. They have an environmental champion at senior officer level, who leads a sustainability team. And are one of the few authorities with a dedicated environmental procurement officer who has written their environmental procurement policy, and a five year environmental procurement strategy.

The sustainability team was originally set up by the planning and transportation department to look at waste home composting, real nappies, eco-schools and green travel plans. In January 2005 there was a drive for green procurement and a vision to achieve ISO 14001.

Having the sustainability team has really helped the rapid decision making such as a decision to change to recycled paper: the team opted for the green option, for all council paper to be from 100 per cent post-consumer waste. Other items that they are looking are water coolers and toner cartridges: by recycling these items and purchasing back the recycled goods they are able to close the loop.

Warwickshire have several electricity contracts including: street lighting, schools and office buildings. They worked with the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation, which seven local authorities sign up to. The purchasing organisation is constantly monitoring the energy markets for the best price on renewable energy for all their contracts. The organisation spotted a good deal and suggested to the County that they should change their contract early to take advantage. The result, another quick win, now almost 94 per cent of Warwickshire's electricity is from renewable energy.

There is a commitment to train all procurement staff in sustainable purchasing and to use a sustainable purchasing toolkit. The toolkit includes a simple questionnaire for suppliers and for staff it has several tools, which differ depending on the value of the purchase.

For purchases below £10,000 there is a simple tick box questionnaire with ten questions. The score from the tick box is then checked against a matrix, which gauges each purchase on its sustainable credentials. If the purchase is a high risk, the purchaser is advised to contact the central purchasing unit for advice.

For purchases over £10,000 and below £100,000 there is a more in-depth questionnaire and analysis.

The toolkit aims to raise awareness amongst staff and suppliers of Warwickshire's commitment to sustainable purchasing. It does not want to make it an arduous task for staff but wants these considerations to be taken into account. The toolkit also includes a section on understanding eco-labels, hints and tips on writing specifications, useful websites and purchasing hazardous chemicals.

Contact

Janet Chapman
Environmental Procurement Officer
www.warwickshire.gov.uk

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10. Support and information

Further information can be found on the following websites:

Department of Communities and Local Government – DCLG – National Procurement Strategy for Local Government

www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1136697

Ecolabelling scheme:

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/consumerprod/ecolabel/index.htm

Energy Star

www.managenergy.net/indexes/l365.htm

Ethical Consumer

www.ethicalconsumer.org

Forest Stewardship Council

www.fsc-uk.org/

Improvement and Development Agency – IDEA – Suitcase studies: lessons in good procurement

www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelD=615948

Local Food Works

www.localfoodworks.org/web/sa/saweb.nsf/0/5c5b10ab441560b580256efb00522584?OpenDocument

London REMADE

www.londonremade.com/mgpc.asp

Mayor of London – Green Procurement Code

www.london.gov.uk/mayor/environment/waste/green_procurement_code.jsp

Office of Government Commerce

online.ogcbuyingsolutions.gov.uk/index.html?slis_checked=1

Regional Centres of Excellence

www.rcoe.gov.uk/rce/core/page.do?pagelD=1

Sustainable Procurement Task Force

www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/delivery/global-local/SustainableProcurementTaskForce-WorkStream2DataandPriorities.htm

Timber procurement

www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/sdig/improving/contextf.htm

Traidcraft

www.traidcraft.co.uk

Waste and Resources Action Programme – WRAP – Creating markets for recycling materials:

www.wrap.org.uk

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The LGIU is unique among the local government family in providing an independent intelligence service to local authorities, built up over 20 years. Free from political constraints, our analysts quickly interpret policy changes and legislation and provide practical advice on the implications for individual local authorities. All our policy analysts are recruited for their knowledge, experience and contacts across government and have worked extensively at senior levels in local authorities, both as officers and councillors.

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