

## Green stationery and paper: Rethinking demand

GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, UNITED KINGDOM

### Procurement objectives

The [Government Office Supplies Contract](#) (GOSC), which began in April 2012, was let by the Cabinet Office and is managed by [HMRC](#). It is a framework agreement through which all UK central government bodies must purchase. Wider public sector authorities such as Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and Milton Keynes Council are also entitled to use it. An open procurement procedure was used, involving e-Auctions for price evaluation.

GCC took steps to reduce stationery demand before signing up to the GOSC, the most significant of which was a month-long ban on stationery purchasing. Beforehand, staff were asked to hand in unused items to be placed in a central stationery cupboard. Ever since, offices are encouraged to share and exchange stationery directly, via the stationery store and by advertising through the staff intranet.

### Background

Stationery, including paper, was targeted as one of the priority categories in GCC's Sustainable Procurement Action Plan. Buying paper from under a central government framework agreement ensured that products meeting the UK's [Government Buying Standards](#) (GBS) would be available. [Defra's](#) 12 GBS product categories are broadly in line with the EU GPP Criteria Product Groups.

The impetus for reducing demand for stationery arose from an event organised by council leaders to involve staff in exchanging ideas on more efficient ways of working from a grassroots perspective.

Preceding approaches to rethinking demand achieved significant energy and cost savings; desktop printers were replaced with Multi-Functional Devices, motion-activated lights were installed in Council buildings and street lights were selectively dimmed or turned off for parts of the night.



### Criteria used

#### **Subject matter of the contract:**

Supply and delivery of office stationery, office paper, janitorial goods, small office machines and the provision of a closed-loop service. Each of these product categories had a separate cost schedule – the closed-loop service was optional for local authorities.

#### **Technical specifications:**

Office Stationery - general:

- Adhesive tapes shall be free from PVC.
- Single use batteries shall be free from mercury and cadmium.
- Electronic calculators shall be solar and dual powered.

Office Stationery - writing instruments and graphical equipment:

- All pencils shall be free from paint/varnish
- Inks shall be free from volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and toxic materials.

Office Paper - paper and card:

- All copier paper, card and cardboard shall be manufactured from 100% and 70% recycled material content respectively.
- Envelopes supplied for general use shall be manufactured from 100% recycled content.
- Envelopes supplied for mailing systems shall be manufactured from at least 60% recycled content and of the remaining content, any virgin fibre shall be sourced from a sustainably managed forest.
- Protective (padded) envelopes non plastic type shall be manufactured from 100% recycled filler materials.
- Adhesives used on "self-seal" envelopes shall be water/vegetable based.

Small Office Machines:

- Conform to "Energy Star" requirements with regard to energy consumption.
- Automatically enter a "sleep mode" after a pre-determined period of inactivity.

Timber and wood-derived goods:

All such goods supplied or used under the GOSC must be independently verifiable and either:

- From a legal and sustainable source; or

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- From a FLEGT-licensed or equivalent source.

Throughout the contract period, the contractor will be required to:

- Ensure any virgin pulp used in manufacture is kept to a minimum and comes from sustainably managed woodlands and that both the virgin pulp and the recycling process is chlorine-free.
- Reduce the amount of packaging.
- Provide information on new or improved environmentally preferable goods when they become commercially available and, promote their use under the GOSC.
- Plan scheduled delivery routes taking into account the most environmental efficient option that minimises carbon production.

### **Award criteria:**

Bids were evaluated according to the Most Economically Advantageous Tender with a ratio of 60% and cost 40% quality. 20% of the quality weighting was allocated to the closed loop service and 5% to overall environmental considerations.

## Results

The UK's GBS were introduced in 2003 and are mandatory for central government departments. This made a clear statement to the market and the environmental standards did not seem to dissuade bidders as 8 companies expressed an interest his contract.

The contract itself not only offers a more complete range of environmentally considerate products to local authorities such as GCC and Milton Keynes council, but also helps to restrict the possibilities for devolved purchasers to buy outside the core list. HMRC and the Ministry of Justice both benefit from the Closed Loop Service offered under the contract which involves the collection, shredding, processing and resupply of white waste paper as 100% recycled copier paper.

GCC saved around £29,000 (€34,000) through the effective demand management of stationery. At GCC this initiative helped to inspire similar activities to reuse and redistribute office items such as print cartridges. Greenhouse gas emissions were significantly reduced by cutting deliveries from every day to once a week. Milton Keynes Council, which also uses the framework, cut deliveries to twice a week and has eliminated the need for 750 invoices to be produced annually through a new electronic system.

## Environmental impacts

There are wide-ranging environmental impacts associated with component materials, production processes and the distribution of stationery products. Mercury and cadmium found in batteries can cause groundwater contamination when disposed of, a particular issue in single-use batteries, therefore solar/dual powered batteries are preferable. VOCs found in ink, PVC associated with adhesives and chlorine used to bleach paper are not allowed under the contract due to harmful effects on humans and the environment.

Restricting the frequency of deliveries and encouraging efficient route planning for logistics vehicles reduces the production of GHGs and other air contaminants, which cause local and global air pollution.

Recycled content requirements for paper products help to reduce the need for deforestation and minimises unnecessary waste production. Detrimental environmental and social impacts including land use change and degradation are also avoided by opting for timber products from sustainably managed sources.

## Lessons learned

This example highlights demand management as an important first step in implementing GPP; the most sustainable item is the one you do not buy at all. From GCC's perspective, successfully embedding GPP into procurement procedures requires a strategic approach. An established sustainability policy and strategy, backed by political support, is vital. The Marrakech Taskforce approach outlines an ideal method for achieving GPP, especially in terms of the prioritisation of product categories.

There is an increasing awareness at an individual and an organisational level of environmental impacts associated with various products. However, it is difficult for local authorities to justify buying more costly green products at a time when efficiency savings are of such prime importance. As well as reducing the need for investing time and human resources in individual tenders, and allowing cost savings through aggregated purchasing, central government framework agreements provide the added benefits for local authorities of being compliant with GBS.