

Committee: Policy and Resources

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Subject: **ENVIRONMENTAL PURCHASING GROUP UPDATE.**

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To report on the progress made in implementing the Council's environmental purchasing policy approved by the Committee in February 1999.

An inter-directorate environmental purchasing working group was formed and has met six times during the year, in order to determine the most beneficial ways of implementing the environmental purchasing policy throughout the Council. A review of all areas of "green" purchases was made that included recycled paper, waste, catering supplies, IT equipment, transportation policies and energy. How far down the supply chain could the Council influence "green" purchasing was a question that the group asked itself, the downstream and upstream impacts, with the example of genetically-modified foodstuffs showing that the Council had most influence on direct purchases.

It was decided that the two main influences the group could achieve during this year was the production of a green purchasing guide for staff as to what goes on in the Council at present for green procurement, and secondly the implementation in major contracts of the consideration of environmental policies in the selection of tenderers and contract evaluation. A dummy eight-page A5 booklet, the green purchasing guide, will be distributed to staff shortly. One of the perceptions of recycled goods was that they came with a price premium, which is no longer the case. The guide will avoid making things too complicated and contains simple lists e.g. products to avoid, Green lists of approved products and suppliers.

In the wider national context progress has been made in the move to a more sustainable Council with initiatives by I&DEA (Improvement and Development Agency), CBC (Central Buying Consortium), SOPO (Society of Purchasing Officers in Local Government) and other organisations. They have helped raise the "green procurement" profile, by holding seminars and conferences. CBC held a conference with GOSE (Government Office for the South-East) for 50 major suppliers, on Greening The Supply Chain For Best Value, in February this year that spread the message.

Progress and timetabling of other areas to be looked at in the coming year on environmental purchasing include looking at investment in pension funds, as it seems only sensible to apply the standards of the policy to the Council's own investments. An office amnesty on paper, and a move away from evaluating "green" goods to looking at the "greening" of service contracts, is also planned. Some authorities have introduced Factor 4 Clubs, which are productivity drivers. "Resource productivity can and should grow fourfold. The amount of wealth extracted from one unit of natural resources can quadruple. Thus we can live twice as well-yet use half as much. -make more from resources." This could be introduced within the Council after further evaluation.

We have already introduced a number of initiatives within the Council, compared to other Local Authorities, but we need to embark on new projects as national initiatives on green purchasing gather speed. A sustainability forum was held at Milton Keynes in January 2000, with the Council's key partners and has also helped spread the message.

A number of other changes in how the Council procures certain goods and services have occurred during the year. These include green energy tariffs, that is electricity produced from renewable energy sources, the replacement of "dirty diesel" by sulphur-free City diesel, the introduction of LPG (Liquid Petroleum Gas), and the test driving of electric vehicles. Bedfordshire County Council had proposed that an Environmental Purchasing Consortium could be set up for authorities in this region, but it is felt that it would offer no further financial benefits, that are not already realised through CBC.