

## **Ethical Procurement Strategy**

### **Purpose**

This Strategy outlines the ethical responsibilities and core objectives of Cheshire Fire Authority in conducting its procurement of good, services and works.

The Authority is committed to ensuring that all goods, services and works procured by it and on its behalf are sourced ethically; both in the way they are procured and the standards that contractors, service providers and suppliers are expected to meet.

The overarching objective is to ensure that the whole supply chain conforms to this Strategy.

### **Scope**

This Strategy is not designed to change the procurement processes the Authority currently follows, but will ensure that as part of the process the wider impact of how the goods, services and works are procured, manufactured and delivered.

We require all our contractors, service providers and suppliers to observe and be compliant with this Strategy and to ensure that this level of compliance is adopted by their own supply chain.

The Strategy aims to achieve the following;

1. Set out a definition of ethical procurement
2. Set out a clear statement of ethical practice responsibilities
3. Set out the core strategic objectives

The Strategy is complemented by and should be read in tandem with the Authority's Social Value Policy.

### **1. Defining Ethical Procurement**

Ethical procurement respects the fundamental standards concerning criminal conduct, human rights and environmental abuse at all levels of the supply chain.

Areas which need to be considered as part of ethical procurement are;

- Human Rights including modern slavery, child employment and working conditions and hours
- Social Value, including use of local suppliers
- Equality and Diversity
- Environment and Sustainability
- Bribery, Fraud and Corruption

### **2. Ethical Practice Responsibilities**

#### **a) Code of Ethics:**

Cheshire Fire Authority has produced a Supplier Code of Ethics (SCE) that must be observed by all contractors, service providers and suppliers (See Appendix A). The SCE

focuses primarily on improving labour and working conditions in the supply chain as well as adhering to the law. The SCE will become a tender and contractual requirement for all contractors, service providers and suppliers working with the Fire Authority.

b) Modern Slavery Act 2015:

Modern slavery is the illegal exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain mainly by the deprivation of a person's liberty by another. Forms of modern slavery can be; sexual exploitation, servitude, forced and compulsory labour, criminal exploitation slavery and human trafficking.

In accordance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015 the Fire Authority recognises its responsibility to prevent illegal exploitation of people throughout its activities and supply chain. The Fire Authority expects all direct contractors, service providers and suppliers to be dedicated to preventing illegal exploitation of people through the activities of their supply chain; including their own suppliers and manufacturers.

c) Environment:

The Fire Authority endeavours to purchase through contractors, service providers and suppliers who are committed to continuously working to improve environmental standards in the supply chain. Examples of this would be contractors, service providers and suppliers who work with organisations and/or have accreditations such as, but not limited to, the following;

- i. Environmental Standards - ISO 14001, EMAS Management System
- ii. Good Agricultural standards - GlobalGAP
- iii. Consumer facing standards - Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, Tea Sourcing Partnership (TSP)
- iv. Organic – Soil Association
- v. Management of World Forests – FSC, PEFC
- vi. Improving Global Supply Chains – SEDEX

d) Equality and Diversity:

The Fire Authority will continue to work with contractors, service providers and suppliers to raise the awareness and importance of equality and diversity in the workplace and to promote best practice.

Contractors, service providers and suppliers are invited to take part in a Diversity Audit administered by the Fire Authority. The objective of this Audit is to test a sample of existing suppliers and rank how effectively they are managing their approach to diversity in their workplace. The results are published amongst suppliers to enable them to see how they are performing against their peers. For contractors, service providers and suppliers requiring assistance, support will be given to aid them in increasing their scores and share with them events that are taking place which may help them to gain a greater understanding of the diversity measures they could put in place in their workplace to make diversity improvements.

### 3. Core Strategy Objectives

The following areas are the focus of the strategy;

#### a. Securing Social Value

The Fire Authority welcomes and encourages innovative tender submissions from all contractors, service providers and suppliers (existing and new) which detail how the contractor, service provider or supplier contributes or plans to contribute to improving public welfare, safer communities, the environment, and the economic well-being of Cheshire. We especially welcome any focus on the improvement to the economic growth of the local economy which will create jobs and opportunities for local people.

The Fire Authority will introduce proportionate weighting in bid evaluation for Social Value criteria depending on the nature of what is being procured and the market in which it is being procured. By default a weighting of 10% will be attributed to Social Value in every advertised procurement exercise to demonstrate the Fire Authority's commitment to increasing the focus on Social Value within its supply chain. If appropriate this weighting may be adjusted to reflect the extent to which a particular procurement exercise creates an opportunity for Social Value.

The Fire Authority has a Social Value Policy which will be issued as an appendix to all advertised tenders and will act as a guide and support to bidders in their social value journey and contributions.

Appendix B provides contact details for voluntary organisations that contractors, service providers and suppliers can contact to volunteer their services, expertise and time to enrich the social value contribution of the contractors, service providers and suppliers.

#### b. Third (Voluntary and Community) Sector Engagement

The Third Sector covers organisations that are not categorised as private sector or public sector. Generally, it includes voluntary and community organisations, social enterprises, mutual and co-operatives. Community organisations generally include; registered charities, associations, self-help groups and community groups.

The overarching difference is that these organisations are driven by achieving social goals rather than profit which is why they are often referred to as 'not-for-profit organisations'. Any operating surplus created by the organisation will be re-invested in realising the social goals rather than being paid out to owners/investors.

There are roughly 500,000 voluntary and community organisations in the UK. The Fire Authority is committed to improving engagement with local third sector organisations and creating partnerships through the contracts it procures.

#### c. Commitment to improving engagement with Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)

The Fire Authority is committed to improving engagement with SMEs. Where appropriate, tenders will be adapted to the needs of SMEs in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 which encourages authorities to use the 'Code of Best Practice Facilitating Access by SMEs to Public Procurement Contracts'.

d. Local Suppliers

To increase opportunities to local suppliers the Fire Authority will mandate that at least one of the three quotes (and more where market conditions permit) within a procurement process will be requested from a Cheshire-based contractor, service provider, or supplier, where feasible.

It will also commit to reviewing its use of procurement Frameworks which cannot be accessed by local contractors, service providers, or suppliers.

e. Market Engagement

The Fire Authority will work to inform its contractors, service providers and suppliers of its increased expectations around ethical procurement practices and the required roles and responsibilities of contractors, service providers and suppliers within its current and future supply chain.

With existing contractors, service providers and suppliers, the Fire Authority will cover this at regular contract review meetings. With new or perspective contractors, service providers and suppliers, this will be considered from the commencement of the procurement process and throughout the life of the contract.

## Appendix A

### Supplier Code of Ethics

Cheshire Fire Authority expects contractors, service providers and suppliers to maintain high standards of integrity and professionalism in their business dealings as well as adhering to the laws of the countries where they operate.

The Fire Authority requests that all contractors, service providers and suppliers pledge to this Code of Ethics and sign to demonstrate their commitment in adhering to the 4 areas covered.

#### **1. Instil a culture of fairness, teamwork, engagement, accountability and enjoyment**

No discrimination - in hiring, remunerating, training, promoting, terminating or retiring either directly or indirectly employed staff, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 (or subsequent iteration of the Regulation).

Disputes procedure - Provide clear and accessible processes for resolving disputes with employees.

#### **2. Have a written plan to work towards paying the Voluntary Living Wage. Promote fair contracts of employment, deploy recruitment and employment practices that identify and support talent, value diversity and promote aspiration and social mobility**

Employment is freely chosen:

- Ensure employees have the freedom to choose to work and not use forced, bonded or non-voluntary prison labour.
- Employees have the right to join independent trade unions or other workers' associations and carry out reasonable representative functions in the workplace.
- Enable alternative means of democratic representation where laws restrict freedom of association and collective bargaining.

Working hours are not excessive - Comply with national and international laws or industry standards on employee working hours, whichever affords greater protection.

Living and Minimum wages:

- Work towards paying the Voluntary Living Wage and provide wages and benefits at rates that meet at least national legal standards.
- Provide employees with an easy to read contract of employment clearly explaining wage levels. Where employees are unable to read, the contract should be explained to them by a union representative or another appropriate third party.
- Wages should be in cash and not in kind (e.g. goods, vouchers) with no deductions made unless permitted under national law or agreed by the employee, without duress.

Child labour is eliminated:

- Support the elimination of child labour.
- Ensure no children and young persons are employed at night or in hazardous conditions, as defined by the International Labour Organisation.

**3. Commit to the delivery of excellent working conditions, high ethical standards, positive health and wellbeing, training, development and reward opportunities for all.**

Working conditions are safe:

- Operate appropriate health and safety policies and procedures overseen by a senior manager responsible for compliance and monitoring and ensuring employees have the necessary training and health and safety equipment.
- Provide comfortable and hygienic working conditions with clean toilets and water suitable for drinking and washing. Where worker housing is provided it should meet the same standards for health and safety as the workplace.

Good health is promoted - Invest in measures for tackling ill health as healthy employees experience a better quality of life and tend to be more productive.

Training is provided - Raise employees' skills through training and access to professional development as befits their role to improve quality and secure greater value for money.

Privacy - Respect privacy of the individual (whether a customer or employee) and handle personal data appropriately.

**4. Acting with integrity and transparency**

Dignity and Respect - Treating customers and employees with dignity and respect.

Transparency

There is a strong public interest in:

- Public procurement processes are being conducted in an open and honest way;
- There being transparency in the spending of public money;
- Suppliers having systems in place to ensure high standards of propriety which ensure public money is used for the purpose it is intended.
- Suppliers being tax compliant.

Supplier Name: .....

Name of Supplier Representative and position: .....

Signature: .....

Date: .....

## Appendix B

### How to Volunteer your Services, Expertise or Time

Below are the details of Voluntary Organisations across Cheshire who work with voluntary, community and faith organisations in the third sector to meet the diverse needs of the local communities.

Their websites list volunteer opportunities from the third sector organisations who are in need of volunteers to fulfil various roles. Alternatively, you can contact the Volunteer Organisations and talk to them about the type of support you could provide.

**Cheshire East CVS**  
www.cvsce.org.uk  
01270 763100  
enquiries@cvsce.org.uk



**Cheshire West Voluntary Action**  
volunteerwestcheshire.org.uk  
01244 401 272  
info@volunteerwestcheshire.org.uk



**Halton & St Helens Voluntary and Community Action**  
www.haltonsthelensvca.org.uk  
01744 457100  
01928 592 405  
info@haltonsthelensvca.org.uk



**Warrington Voluntary Action**  
www.warringtonva.org.uk  
01925 246880  
info@warringtonva.org.uk

