



Belfast City Council

Sustainable Procurement Policy & Strategy Document

Version 1.0



Belfast
City Council

CONTENTS

Our Ambition, Values and Expectations	3
Introduction	3
Our Ambitions for this Policy	3
Our Values & Expectations.....	5
Legislative & Strategic Context	6
Climate Action and the Net Zero Challenge.....	6
Implementing our Policy	8
Tenders >£1m value	8
Mandatory Requirements.....	8
Contract Lifecycle.....	13
Contract Lifecycle – Stage 1 Pre -Tender Considerations	13
Contract Lifecycle – Stage 2 Evaluation and Award.....	15
Contract Lifecycle – Stage 3 Contract Management & Delivery.....	16
Support & Guidance	17
Monitoring & Reporting	17
Appendices	20
Appendix 1 – Supplier Code of Conduct	20
Appendix 2 – Sustainable Initiatives	24
Glossary of Terms	27
Document Control.....	28

Our Ambition, Values and Expectations

Introduction

In June 2022, following an extensive period of internal and external stakeholder engagement, we published and implemented our Social Value Procurement Policy 'SVPP'; being the first local authority in Northern Ireland to have in place such a policy.

The SVPP was designed to utilise the influence and power of our procurement expenditure to help deliver the Belfast Agenda while ensuring the best possible value for money 'VFM' when purchasing goods, services and works for the people of Belfast.

The SVPP has proven to be a success with some notable outcomes to date including:

- Payment of the Real Living Wage 'RLW' by our suppliers
- Prohibited use of Zero Hours Contracts by our suppliers
- Greater consideration of use of reserved contracts for social enterprises 'SEs' and creating connections between private sector and VCSE sector to support contract delivery
- Creation of local jobs for apprenticeships, our Inclusive Growth (IG) Target Groups and students as well the delivery of employability and skills initiatives by suppliers
- The delivery of a wide range of social value initiatives by suppliers that support local communities and people covering improving good relations, reducing crime, improving health, increasing sports participation and increasing arts participation
- The delivery of a wide range of environmental improvement initiatives by suppliers that aim to reduce supplier's carbon footprint, support the circular economy and enhance biodiversity

This Sustainable Policy & Strategy Document 'Policy' aims to build on these successes, apply lessons learned and further strengthen our commitments to ethical procurement, social value and climate action whilst delivering VFM for the ratepayers of Belfast.

The Policy also incorporates throughout our strategy when applying the Policy so as to set clear expectations of our suppliers and what suppliers can expect from the Council.

Our Ambitions for this Policy

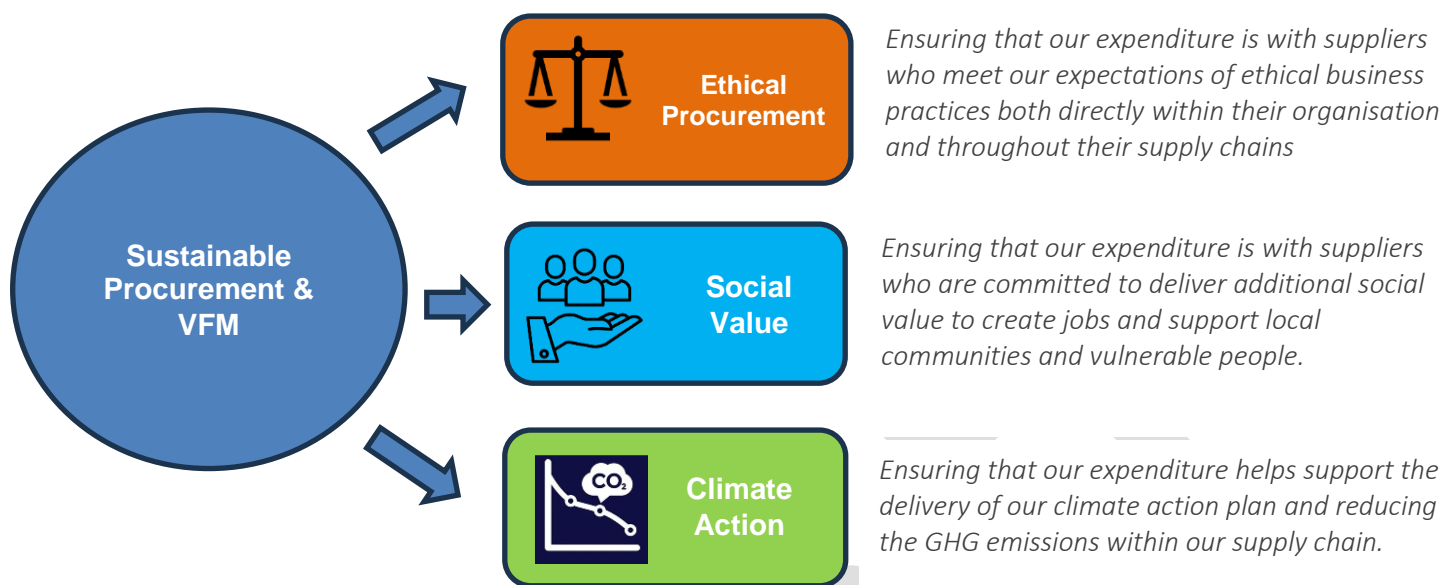
Whilst seeking to achieve the best commercial outcome from our procurement activities, it is our aim to also ensure that the purchase of goods, services and works achieves VFM by making a positive difference to the people, communities and local climate in Belfast.

We have defined Sustainable Procurement as:

"A commitment to using our influence and procurement power to help deliver the Belfast Agenda; to ethically drive inclusive economic growth, support the Council's climate commitments, and support local communities and vulnerable people – while ethically delivering the best possible value for money when purchasing goods, services and works for the current and future generations of Belfast"

We have developed 3 key themes for this Policy as set out in Fig 1.1 which will be used throughout the Policy.

Fig 1.1: Sustainable Procurement Themes



The Policy sets out what VFM now means for the Council through our procurement activity. It is no longer just price and quality as a key driver but the best sustainable outcome, ensuring a proportionate balanced consideration of quality, cost, ethical procurement, social value and climate action when purchasing goods, services or works.

Furthermore, evidence indicates that the more we spend with Belfast based suppliers, the more our residents will be able to benefit. The Policy aims to support local businesses, increase local competitiveness and improve the climate resilience of its supply chains, reducing their vulnerability to climate risk.




As explained further in this Policy we will adopt a proportionate approach using £1m tender value threshold to help support and develop local SMEs whilst still harnessing our buying power to deliver lasting and meaningful sustainable outcomes.

We will continue to lead the way for local councils in Northern Ireland in terms of sustainable procurement best practice and innovative approaches to Policy delivery.

We will work collaboratively across the Belfast anchor institutions to encourage adoption of our sustainable procurement approach.

Fig 1.2 sets out further our ambitions for each of our 3 key themes.

Fig 1.2: Sustainable Procurement Ambitions

Policy Theme	Policy Ambitions
 Ethical Procurement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure our procurement spend supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ suppliers who have robust policies, procedures and controls in tackling modern slavery and upholding international human rights standards ➤ suppliers who adopt fair labour practices and provide safe working environments ➤ suppliers who adopt and demonstrate the highest standards in ethical business practices. 2. Support fair and ethical trading by our suppliers and their supply chains. 3. Promote fair pay for all and as minimum the payment of the Real Living Wage by our suppliers. 4. Eliminate the use of zero hours contracts by our suppliers. 5. Ensure suppliers comply with data protection and information security management best practice.
 Social Value	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the number of jobs in Belfast and create local employment opportunities for the long-term unemployed, economically inactive and other underrepresented groups in the labour market. 2. Ensure procurement spend delivers additional social value projects for local communities and vulnerable people. 3. Reward suppliers who embrace the opportunity to deliver additional social value. 4. Increase the use of reserved contracts to support Social enterprises and local businesses. 5. Promote the Belfast Business Promise and increase membership of our Belfast based suppliers.
 Climate Action	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reward suppliers who adopt and demonstrate the highest standards in environmental best practice. 2. Work with suppliers who are able to demonstrate awareness of the impact of climate change on their operations and supplies, and have built in mitigations to reduce disruptions, including climate related maintenance costs and improved climate resilience. 3. Reduce our GHG emissions associated with the purchase of goods, services and works to support our net zero transition including using local suppliers to reduce miles travelled (where possible in line with our legislative framework). 4. Consider and include low carbon standards and circular economy provisions in our Tenders as part of the best VFM outcome. 5. Reduce/eliminate Single Use Plastic 'SUP' and plastic pollution by our suppliers and their associated supply chains. 6. Switch to renewable and low-carbon energy use through the procurement of power purchase agreements (where available).

Our Values & Expectations

It is important we are clear with our suppliers about the values of the Council and the associated expectations we have of our suppliers. We have set this out in our Supplier Code of Conduct which is included as Appendix 1.

As part of each Tender a supplier will be required to confirm they have read, understood and provide a commitment that they will ensure their conduct, whilst working on Council contracts, aligns with our Supplier Code of Conduct.

Failure by a supplier to provide this confirmation will result in a supplier being excluded from the procurement process. Furthermore, should it later be found during a contract that a supplier's conduct does not align with this Code of Conduct then this may be considered a breach of contract.

Legislative & Strategic Context

The Policy has been designed to align with the key objectives of the Procurement Act¹ which includes:

1. Delivering VFM – Cabinet Office guidance advises to consider further what value means to our organisation and the community we serve, and how we can get the best mix of economy, efficiency and effectiveness that achieves the intended outcome over the whole lifetime of the contract.
2. Maximising public benefit – Cabinet Office guidance asks us to think about the extent to which our contracts can deliver greater benefit i.e. considering social value or environmental benefits that could be achieved by the contract.
3. Sharing information – We will monitor and publish sustainable commitments by suppliers and delivery of same.
4. Treat suppliers the same and acting with integrity – the Policy adds to the Council's established procurement practices and governance arrangements ensuring a transparent and fair procurement process for all.
5. Have regard for SMEs (reduce/remove barriers to participation) – we have considered and adopted a proportionate approach to support SMEs throughout the Policy.

In addition, the Policy aligns with current strategic Council initiatives and policies including:

1. The Belfast Agenda and Corporate Plan and the five strategic themes particularly Our Economy, Our Planet and Compassionate City.
2. Inclusive Growth Strategy and our corporate commitment to harnessing procurement to social value and the associated principles.
3. Belfast Business Promise and our Promise Pledges
4. Climate Action Plan including actions to develop a sustainable/ low carbon procurement policy and supplier guidance documents to support a transition to an inclusive, net zero and resilient future; and assisting the Council to adapt to a changing climate and reduce risks on its services, supply chains and operations resulting from extreme weather.
5. Single Use Plastics 'SUP' Policy (under development) and the policy objectives including quantify and monitor SUP usage and disposal, adopt best practice principles for unavoidable SUPs, integrate SUPs into policies, strategies, and plans; minimise SUPs and adopt best practice through our suppliers and contractors; and raise awareness of SUPs across the community.
6. Sustainable Food Policy (under development) and the commitment to use our purchasing power to demonstrate how the food system can become more sustainable, ethical, and provide better choices for people, and for the local and wider environment and society.

Our ambitions continue to be somewhat constrained by the legislative environment in which we operate. These constraints include Article 19 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1992. The latter places restrictions on the Council's freedom to consider various matters when procuring works or goods by declaring certain items 'non-commercial considerations' which cannot be considered as part of a procurement process. We will continue to support the development and implementation of a Social Value Act for Northern Ireland and updating Article 19 so that the Policy can be fully implemented.

Climate Action and the Net Zero Challenge

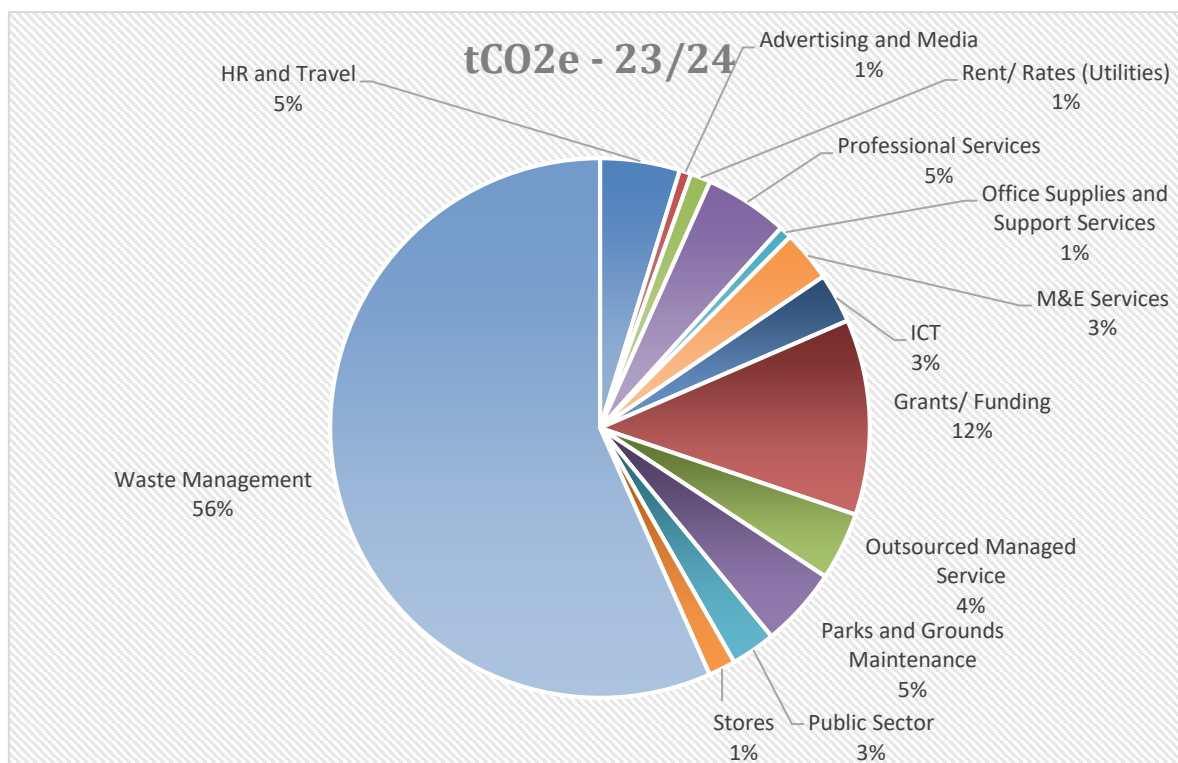
Belfast declared a climate emergency declaration in October 2019 and has adopted carbon reduction targets of 66% reduction by 2025, 80% reduction by 2030 and 100% reduction by 2050. Procurement is a key lever to

¹ Includes the Procurement Act 2023 and the Public Contracts Regulations 2024

support climate change mitigation and adaptation for the Council whilst driving wider supply chain decarbonisation.

Based on recent carbon emissions 'CO2e' analysis of Council spend² with our suppliers it was found that CO2e emissions from the Council's supply chain account for approximately 75% (55 kt) of the Council's total carbon footprint. The biggest CO2e contributors by spend category is set out in Fig 1.3 below.

Fig 1.3: Key Spend Categories – CO2e analysis



The Policy will also consider other areas of spend that contribute to our carbon footprint and have a high local environmental impact for the Council including:

- Energy (Gas and Electricity) supply which are Scope 2 emissions
- Single Use Plastics use and plastic pollution by our suppliers
- Food and associated sustainable local producing and sourcing

It is therefore imperative that the Council leverages its procurement expenditure within these spend categories to drive real change within our supply chain's business practices to support the Council's net zero ambitions and the 2050 net zero target set for Belfast by the Government.

To do this we need to:

- Have greater visibility of our supply chain CO2e data on an ongoing basis
- Work with our suppliers on delivery of their climate action and carbon reduction plans with year-on-year improvements and progression.
- Consider environmental risks for each Tender/ project including climate change mitigation and adaptation, prevention of pollution, resource use and consumption, and protection and restoration of biodiversity

² Based on FY23/24 expenditure and baseline data

- Have a consistent and proportionate approach to including lower carbon standards within specifications/works information and tender evaluations when procuring goods, services and works.

Implementing our Policy

Tenders >£1m value

An analysis of our contract records³ shows that contracts with a value of >£1m accounts for approximately 75% of the Council's total contract spend⁴ but only accounts for 15% of the total number of contracts.




This therefore presents an opportunity through this Policy to:

- Set higher expectations for suppliers who apply for Tenders >£1m value and allow for greater focus on management and delivery of their sustainable commitments.
- Simplify the procurement process and associated burden for local SMEs applying for Tenders up to £1m whilst using the Policy to develop these suppliers so they can grow their business and bid for larger value Tenders in the future, both for the Council and other organisations.

The application of this >£1m value threshold throughout the contract lifecycle is explained further throughout this Policy.

Mandatory Requirements

The following mandatory requirements for suppliers applies to all Tenders:-

Mandatory Requirement & Description	Supplier Requirement
 <p>Acceptance of our Code of Conduct The Council has developed a Supplier Code of Conduct which reflects the values and aspirations of the Council and the associated expectations of our suppliers. This set out in Appendix 1 of this Policy.</p>	Suppliers are required to confirm that they have read, understood and will ensure their conduct, whilst working on Council contracts, will align with our Supplier Code of Conduct.
 <p>Modern slavery The Council sees our engagement/ reach with a wide range of suppliers and market sectors as an excellent opportunity to help tackle modern slavery</p>	Suppliers are required to demonstrate they comply with the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 , where applicable
 <p>Prompt payment of suppliers The Council is committed to ensuring our suppliers and their supply chains are paid promptly i.e. within 30 days of a valid invoice being submitted.</p>	Suppliers are required to ensure and confirm they have in place sufficient policies and procedures to ensure prompt payment of their suppliers and associated supply chains.

³ Based on available contract records in September 2025.

⁴ Based on total of 458 contract records and total combined contract value of £389m. >£1m value threshold would account for 65 contract records (15%) and total combined contract value of £291m (75%).



Real Living Wage

The Council is the first local authority in Northern Ireland to become an accredited Living Wage Employer. The accreditation acknowledges that the Council pays its employees the Foundation Living Wage as well as ensuring any regularly contracted workers are paid the living wage hourly rate

Suppliers are required to pay, as a minimum, all employees assigned to work on Council contracts the Real Living Wage as published by the [Living Wage Foundation](#).



Zero Hours Contracts

A Zero Hours Contract means a type of contract between an employer and a worker according to which the employer is not obliged to provide any minimum working hours and the worker is not obliged to accept any work offered.

Suppliers are not permitted to use Zero Hours Contracts for any employee who is assigned to work on Council contracts



Cyber Essential Certification

Cyber Essentials is the minimum standard of cyber security recommended by the Government for organisations of all sizes.

Suppliers must, as a minimum, be [Cyber Essentials](#) certified (or national equivalents) and maintain a valid certification when under contract with the Council.⁵


Developed by the experts at the National Cyber Security Centre, the certification scheme is aligned to five technical controls designed to prevent the most common internet based cyber security threats.

Where a supplier does not have Cyber Essentials at the time of Tender, then this must be attained within 12 months of contract award.⁶

⁵ More enhanced certification may be required (i.e. Cyber Essentials Plus or SO/IEC 27001:2022) depending on the nature of the contract and the types of data processed/handled (i.e. personal and sensitive).

⁶ Failure to attain Cyber Essentials in this timeframe may result in termination of contract.

The following additional mandatory requirements will apply to all Tenders⁷ > £1m:

Policy Theme	Mandatory Requirement & Description	Supplier Requirement	How we apply this to Tenders ≤ £1m value?
 <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Ethical Procurement</p>	<p>Ethical Procurement Policy</p> <p>The Council wants to contract with suppliers who have in place robust ethical procurement practices and who treat their supply chains fairly.</p>	<p>Suppliers are required to have in place policies and procedures which clearly set out their commitment to ethical procurement practices and fair treatment of supply chains.</p>	<p>In the instance that the supplier does not already have these policies and procedures in place, then this is included as a supplier development opportunity in the sustainable initiatives as set out in Appendix 2.</p>
	<p>Supply Chain Audits and Mapping</p> <p>It is important that the Council has adequate transparency of supply chains involved in supporting contract delivery to ensure our expenditure continues to support suppliers with sound ethical business practices.</p>	<p>Within 12 weeks of contract award suppliers will be required to have conducted an audit of their supply chain, who is involved in contract delivery, to ensure, as a minimum, 1st tier suppliers involved comply with the Council’s Supplier Code of Conduct. Suppliers will provide a report detailing this audit including a mapping exercise showing suppliers involved and associated role in contract delivery.</p> <p>Where a contract is considered higher risk as part of an Anti-Slavery Risk Tiering Tool ‘ARTT’ this supply chain audit and mapping exercise may be extended to lower supply chain tiers.</p>	<p>This is included as a supplier development opportunity in the sustainable initiatives as set out in Appendix 2.</p>

⁷ Where a procurement includes Lots the over £1m threshold value applies to Lot value only. Where the procurement involves the establishment of a Framework Agreement or a Dynamic Market the £1m threshold value applies to any call-off contract.



Social Value

HR policies and procedures – Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The Council wants to contract with suppliers who have in place robust HR policies and procedures that support fair and equal treatment of their employees.

Suppliers are required to have in place policies and procedures which clearly set out their commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace, including evidence of delivering training to staff relating to these policies and procedures.

In the instance that the supplier does not already have these policies and procedures in place, then this is included as a supplier development opportunity in the sustainable initiatives as set out in Appendix 2.

HR policies and procedures – Employee Development & Wellbeing

The Council wants to contract with suppliers who have in place robust HR policies and procedures that support fair and equal treatment of their employees.

Suppliers are required to have in place policies, procedures and employee contractual terms which clearly set out their commitment to the development, health and wellbeing of their employees.

In the instance that the supplier does not already have these policies and procedures in place, then this is included as a supplier development opportunity in the sustainable initiatives as set out in Appendix 2.



Climate Action

Carbon Reporting and Carbon Reduction Plans

It is important that the Council has transparency of our suppliers GHG emissions and visibility of suppliers’ carbon reduction plans to support and evidence our journey to net zero.

Within 12 weeks of contract award suppliers will be required to upload (using the Council’s carbon reporting tool) their GHG emission data and publish a Carbon Reduction Plan demonstrating year on year carbon reduction within their organisation over the Contract Period.

This is included as a supplier development opportunity in the sustainable initiatives as set out in Appendix 2.

Environmental Management Systems 'EMS'

The Council wants to contract with suppliers who have in place robust environmental policies and procedures to protect our local environment and reduce our carbon footprint.

Suppliers are required to have in place a UKAS accredited EMS (i.e. ISO14001 or national equivalent).

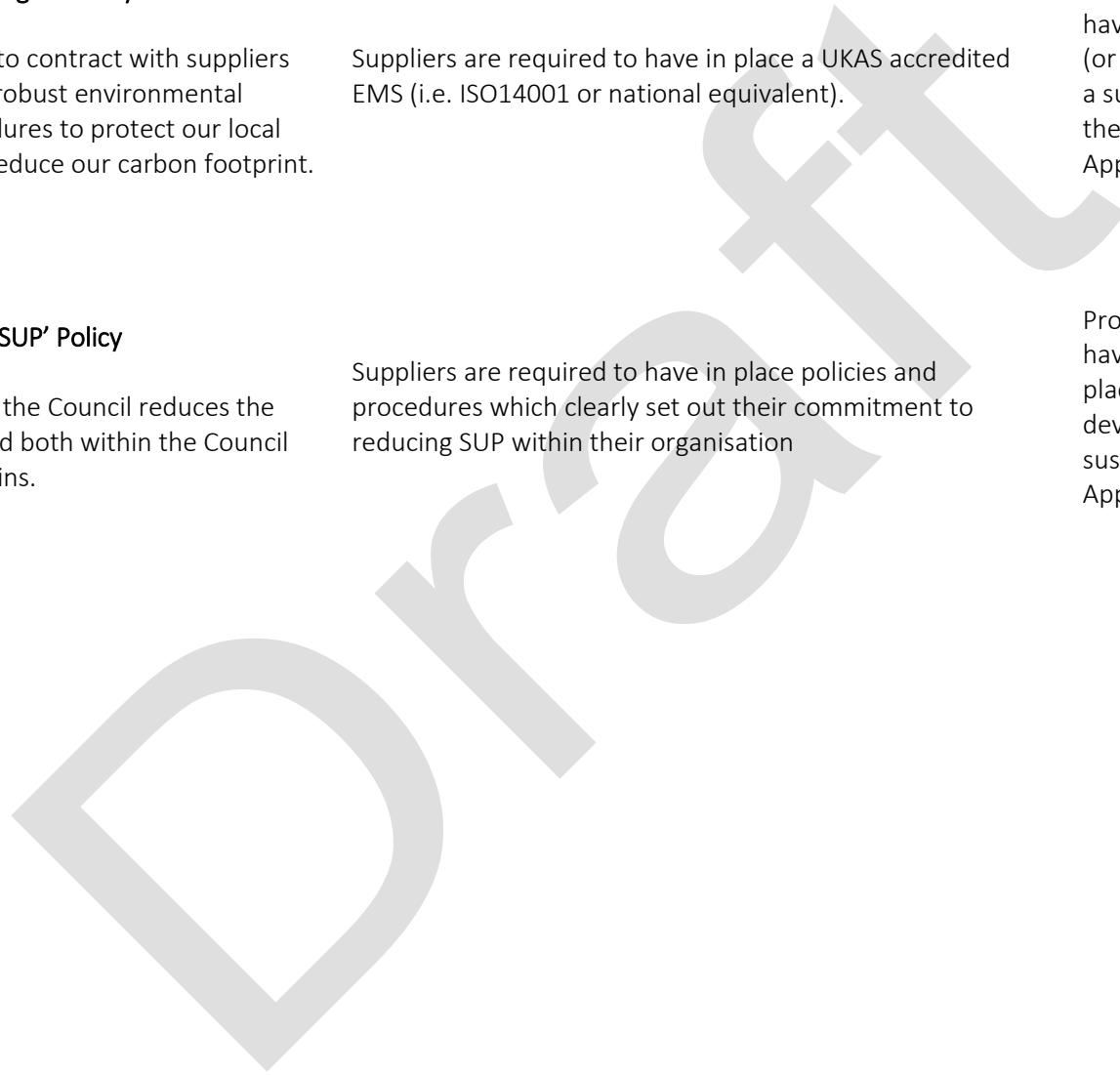
Provided the supplier does not already have a UKAS accredited EMS in place (or equivalent), then this is included as a supplier development opportunity in the sustainable initiatives as set out in Appendix 2.

Single Use Plastics 'SUP' Policy

It is important that the Council reduces the amount of SUP used both within the Council and our supply chains.

Suppliers are required to have in place policies and procedures which clearly set out their commitment to reducing SUP within their organisation

Provided the supplier does not already have these policies and procedures in place, then this is included as a supplier development opportunity in the sustainable initiatives as set out in Appendix 2.



Contract Lifecycle

To realise the ambitions of the Policy it is important that its application is considered throughout the contract lifecycle. The 3 stages of the contract lifecycle are set out below.

Figure 1.4: Contract Lifecycle



1. Pre-Tender Stage – this stage covers identification of business need through to finalising procurement documents for publication. This stage requires the development of a procurement strategy taking into consideration effective sustainability requirements in line with this Policy including, where appropriate, project commissioning and business case development.
2. Evaluation & Award - this stage covers how we evaluate Tenders and ensure the best VFM outcome is reached in line with the requirements of this Policy.
3. Contract & Performance Management - this stage covers how we will manage supplier performance and ensure they deliver on the initiatives they committed to as part of their tender bid.

Contract Lifecycle – Stage 1 Pre -Tender Considerations

Commissioning and Business Cases

We will consider environmental risks and sustainable aims and outcomes for a project at the commissioning stage including, where required, business case development. Outputs from these considerations will then be incorporated at procurement stage in line with this Policy.

Reserving Contracts

We will use reserved contracts, where appropriate, to support:

- Social Enterprises
- Belfast based businesses (Below Threshold Tenders only in line with legislative constraints)
- Northern Ireland based businesses (Below Threshold Tenders only in line with legislative constraints)

This is aligned with the Council’s ambitions to use expenditure to support local businesses with associated economic benefits and reducing our carbon footprint.

We will establish appropriate monitoring and reporting procedures to ensure these considerations to reserve are appropriately challenged.

Procurement Strategy Development

A Procurement Strategy⁸ will be developed for each Tender at pre-tender stage to ensure the best VFM outcome for the requirement being procured.

Short duration Tenders (i.e. less than 6 months) may require a simplified proportional approach. This will be considered as part of the Procurement Strategy with best endeavours made to fully apply the Policy.

A procurement strategy template and associated supporting toolkits, guidance and checklists will be provided for Officers to ensure consistent adoption.

Tenders >£1m value – Sustainable Review

Tenders with a value over £1m will also be subject to a Sustainable Review which will be a more in-depth review with the three key themes in mind.

Resources with the required experience and knowledge will be assigned to conduct these reviews which will include:

- Ethical Procurement – consider ethical issues, risks and outcomes for the requirement and any required additional standards for suppliers and contractual clauses; particularly for requirements that involve suppliers and supply chains that are more susceptible to modern slavery and human rights abuse.
- Social Value - consider social value aims and outcomes for the requirement and any specific targeted outcomes to include as clauses in the specification and/or evaluation criteria.
- Climate Action - consider environmental risks, carbon reduction aims and outcomes for the requirement and any specific targeted outcomes to include as clauses in the specification and/or evaluation criteria.
- Tender Evaluation – consideration of any required innovative approaches to evaluation to support sustainable outcomes e.g. using of weighted carbon pricing, bespoke sustainable criteria evaluation questions and scoring mechanisms etc.

This review may also result in a unique list of sustainable initiatives being developed for the requirement to support any targeted outcomes, further to those set out in Appendix 2.

Sustainable Standards Database

The above review processes will ensure that emerging best practice is considered for each applicable Tender covering the three key themes of the Policy. Any emerging best practice will then be captured and shared for consideration for inclusion in all Tenders as a standard practice and for further Policy developments.

Appropriate procedures and controls will be established to ensure this database is used by Officers and maintained.

⁸ Procurement strategies typically include consideration of reserving contracts; procurement route; Pre-market engagement 'PME' planning; sustainable standards and best practice; SME consideration and removal of barriers; risk assessments; evaluation strategies; and conflict of interest assessments.

Contract Lifecycle – Stage 2 Evaluation and Award

Sustainable criteria weighting and points targets

All Tenders will include a minimum 10% weighting for sustainable criteria as follows:

Tenders up to £1m value	Tenders >£1m
	
Min. 10% weighting	Min. 15% weighting *

* This weighting may be reviewed at Stage 1 Sustainable Review and may result in the % weighting being increased depending on the requirement and how it might support Policy ambitions.

For each Tender a sustainable criteria points target will be generated on the basis of 1 point for every £10,000 value with a minimum points target of 10 for all Tenders.

This translates to the following example points targets:

Tender value	Points target
Up to £100,000	10
£1,000,000	100
£5,000,000	500

Points targets can then be reviewed to ensure they are proportionate depending on the requirement being procured, market capacity/capability and sustainable aims and objectives.

Supplier Offers and evaluation

We have developed a list of sustainable initiatives (Appendix 2) that are linked to Council's strategic policies and initiatives and Policy ambitions. We have assigned a proportionate points-based system for each initiative which reflects both a fair assessment of the resource cost and investment for suppliers in delivering the initiative and the strategic importance of each initiative in supporting Policy ambitions.

As part of the Tender process, suppliers will select which of these initiatives they are willing to offer and commit to delivering under the contract achieving the points target set for the Tender, the 'Supplier Offer'.

Suppliers will also have to set out how they plan to deliver their Supplier Offer demonstrating they have a sound understanding of each initiative and our expectations and how they will put in place required resourcing and support mechanisms to ensure delivery.

Each Supplier Offer will then be assessed as part of the evaluation process against a set scoring mechanism.

Private/ Social Enterprises Partnerships

We want to use the Policy to encourage the creation of private/social enterprise partnerships 'PSPs' to support the delivery of our sustainable initiatives. This would involve a private sector supplier working with a registered Social Enterprise to deliver a sustainable initiative as part of the Tender. To do this we have

included additional points where suppliers chose to do this as part of the Supplier Offer as shown in Appendix 2 which we believe reflects the additional benefit of PSPs in supporting our Policy ambitions.

The Council will work with suppliers to broker relationships between suppliers who commit to this PSP approach and Belfast based Social Enterprises.

Minimum scoring threshold

We want to ensure that when awarding Tenders that a minimum level of sustainable outcomes is awarded. Therefore, a minimum scoring threshold of 60% against sustainable criteria will be required. This is an 'Acceptable' response in line with our standard scoring mechanism⁹. This translates to scoring as follows:

Social Value Weighting	Minimum Social Value Scoring Threshold
10%	6 out 10
15%	9 out 15

This enables a proportionate approach setting a minimum standard for suppliers to meet and increasing the opportunity for sustainable criteria to be a differentiating factor in a Tender evaluation outcome.

Should a supplier fail to meet these minimum scoring thresholds following evaluation then their entire tender bid would be excluded from the tender process.

Contract Lifecycle – Stage 3 Contract Management & Delivery

The measurement and monitoring of sustainable commitments delivered by suppliers will be incorporated into the general performance management of the contract. Suppliers will be expected to report on their delivery of sustainable outcomes. Depending on the contract type, we will introduce measures such as:

- Sustainable key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Service performance deductions/service credits in the event sustainable commitments are not fully delivered. Any subsequent payments by suppliers could be used to fund other Council led sustainable initiatives.
- Retention money to cover sustainable commitments until fully delivered.

In all cases, we will ensure that suppliers are given a reasonable opportunity to rectify any performance issues.

To support our contract managers will we:

- ensure contract management is sufficiently resourced and supported in the Council
- ensure sufficient training and guidance is available and associated support
- ensure contract managers have the required management systems and tools to do the role
- engage with contract managers to assess Policy impact, receive feedback and continually improve.

⁹ The % minimum threshold may be amended in line with what is considered 'Acceptable' in line with the scoring mechanism included in the Tender.

Support & Guidance

Support and guidance for Officers

We will put in place the necessary governance arrangements and supporting documentation to ensure the Policy is fully operational across the Council and expectations understood by Officers when implementing projects and conducting procurement exercises including the necessary training.

We ensure our contract managers have the required support through robust contract management systems and procedures including the provision of training.

Support and guidance for suppliers

We will ensure our Tenders will provide sufficient clarity regarding what is expected from the Policy in terms of Suppliers Offers, evaluation, contract terms and contract management.

We will encourage suppliers to ask questions and provide feedback as part of the Tender process so the Council can adapt the Policy as appropriate.

We will promote the Policy at networking, meet the buyer and procurement conference events.

We will continue to publish [an 18-month procurement pipeline](#) on our website to help suppliers prepare for future tendering opportunities.

We will continue to encourage our Officers to seek [quotations](#) from local Belfast businesses (currently £30,000 but under review), and encourage potential suppliers to [register with our supplier database](#).

Networking and shared learning

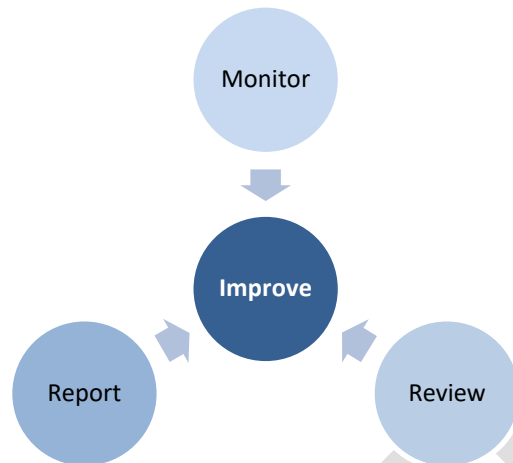
We will network with external stakeholders to share learning, explore best practice and support Policy development including but not limited to:

- SIB
- Social Enterprise NI
- Local Governmental Association and NI Councils
- GB Councils
- Local anchor institutions

Monitoring & Reporting

Appropriate and robust monitoring and reporting is crucial for our proposed approach to be successful and achieve our Policy ambitions. We will establish a governance model for the Policy to ensure its application is applied in a consistent and effective manner across Tenders as illustrated in Fig 1.5 below.

Figure 1.5: Governance model



Monitor

We will capture key metrics such as:

- No. and value of Tenders the Policy has been applied to including reason where it is not applied
- Above and below £1m Tender value threshold application
- % weighting applied to Tenders and points targets for evaluation
- Supplier's commitments to delivering sustainable initiatives i.e. which initiatives and associated metrics
- Delivery and completion of these supplier commitments. We will continue to work with the SIB Social Value Unit and use their reporting tool.
- No. of contracts reserved to SEs, Belfast based companies and/or NI based companies.

Review

Best practice associated the Policy is constantly evolving and it is important that we adapt the Policy to keep pace with developments.

We will establish a Sustainable Procurement Review Team that will meet regularly to consider and review:

- Any feedback/ complaints/ issues associated with the Policy and associated actions to address
- The quality of the Supplier Offers being awarded and any improvements required e.g. evaluation training for officers, improved guidance for suppliers etc
- The impact the Policy is having
- Any development/changes required to the Policy and supporting guidance documents in line with emerging best practice

We will work with our marketing and communications team to tell stories and create case studies associated with the Policy. This will help with increasing awareness of the Policy and the impact it is having.

Report

In conjunction with SIB's Social Value Unit we will continue to work on developing current data capture and reporting tools to allow us to effectively monitor sustainable initiatives delivery and act against non-delivery by suppliers.

We will agree and provide regular reporting requirements to Council senior management and Elected Members, as required, using the key metrics captured as part of our monitoring.

We will continue to include Policy outputs in our annual procurement performance report, highlighting the benefits and impact of the Policy and outlining any opportunities for continual improvement.

Draft

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Supplier Code of Conduct

The Council is committed to upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct in all our procurement activities. We want to maximise additional social value delivery through procurement, ensuring that public contracts deliver meaningful benefits to local communities.

We are committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions and embedding climate action into procurement decisions.

We are fully supportive of all UK and associated international human rights obligations as detailed here [Human Rights: The UK's international human rights obligations - GOV.UK](#) and the UN's [Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework | OHCHR](#)

We want to award contracts to suppliers that share and adhere to this vision.

This Supplier Code of Conduct sets out the values and expectation of suppliers who wish to contract with the Council. Suppliers will be required to acknowledge that they have read, understood and will adhere to this Code of Conduct when providing goods, services and/or works for the Council.

The Council expects its suppliers to maintain high standards of integrity and professionalism in their business dealings, adhering to the laws of the countries where they operate and taking action where necessary to minimise negative impacts of their business operations.

The values and expectations set out in this Code of Conduct apply to our supplier's direct business operations and member of its supply chain used to deliver Council contracts.

Where any local law, regulations or policy require stricter standards than this Supplier Code of Conduct, suppliers must adhere to such requirements.

Our Values and expectations

Modern Slavery and Human Rights Protection

We respect and uphold international human rights standards and comply with the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act as a minimum. We reject forced labour and exploitation and ensure employees are free to choose their employment and leave that employment.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- respect and support the protection of internationally proclaimed Human Rights and put the necessary measures and controls in place to ensure their business operations do not support forced, bonded, involuntary prison labour, human trafficking or child labour
- fully co-operate with any associated investigations/ audits in a transparent manner
- without delay, inform us of any investigation, inquiry or enforcement proceedings in relation to any allegation of slavery or human trafficking offenses brought against them or any part of their supply chain.

Fair labour practices and provide a safe working environment

We promote excellent working conditions, positive health and wellbeing, and training, development and reward opportunities for all. [We promote diversity and inclusion for all](#). The Council is an accredited Living Wage Employer.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- pay the Real Living Wage to staff employed to work on Council contracts and ensure national legal standards regarding pay and working conditions are adhered to in their business operations including Working Time Regulations 1998 (or equivalent national legislation)
- remunerate all employees equally at the same employment grade and without discrimination i.e. regardless of education, social class/caste, nationality, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation unless statutory conditions require otherwise
- support their employees through access to training and development opportunities and well-being initiatives
- facilitate inclusive practices and promote diversity in the workplace
- prioritise workers' health and safety 'H&S' ensuring:
a safe and hygienic working environment is provided
all required H&S equipment required for the role is provided free of charge and is safe for use and regularly tested. Employees should receive all required training, including refresher, in the safe operation of all equipment and tools
policies and processes are in place for recording and eliminating occurrence/reoccurrence of H&S related incidents.

Ethical business practices and sustainable procurement

We enforce zero tolerance for bribery, fraud, and unethical conduct in procurement and contract delivery. We require traceability and transparency of the origin of goods and reject any goods produced or distributed using unethical practices. We embed sustainable criteria (ethical, social value and climate action) within our contracts to deliver lasting and meaningful local community benefits. We encourage participation in our procurements from SMEs, social enterprises, and local suppliers.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- always act with respect, integrity and fairness with their sub-contractors/supply chain including:
 - o not imposing unnecessary or unfair contract terms or unfairly passing risk down to sub-contractors/ supply chains
 - o where possible, appoint sub-contractors through an open and fair process
 - o ensure prompt payments to their supply chain in line with Council terms and conditions
- monitor and manage risks in their supply chains, including subcontractors and actively seek out ways in which to minimise negative impacts
- act in compliance with all laws, regulations and taxation rules of the countries they are working in, manufacturing in or trading with, as applicable, and adhere to international standards where applicable

- not be involved with acts of corruption or bribery, or support acts of violence or terrorism or abuse of individual people or communities.
- not be involved in or offer improper payments such as kickbacks or facilitation payments to Council employees or Elected Members
- deliver on their sustainable initiative commitments to the standards expected by the Council, in a timely manner and, where possible, include community benefit delivery in the locality of where the contract is performed
- ensure business operations do not harm the local community in which these operations take place or where the delivery of the contract takes place and appropriately address any concerns or requests from those communities in a timely manner.

Data protection and integrity

We handle data responsibly, securely, and in compliance with relevant legislation.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- as a minimum, maintain a valid Cyber Essentials accreditation
- comply with all applicable data protection laws
- consider data protection risks associated with Council contracts and mitigate/reduce risk where possible.

Responsible use of Artificial Intelligence 'AI'

AI has the potential to make a substantial impact for individuals, communities, and society. We want to make sure that the use of AI is positive and does not unintentionally harm those affected by it.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- make considerations of AI ethics and safety as a high priority
- put in place sufficient controls and procedures to ensure AI is used responsibly and safely; and any such controls and procedures are regularly monitored and updated in line with emerging best practice.

Environmental Legislative Compliance

We take compliance with environmental legislation and associated duty of care obligations very seriously.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- conduct their business in accordance with local and national environmental laws, regulations, and directives of the countries they are working in, manufacturing in or trading with.
- treat and manage waste following all legal requirements and industry best practice throughout the supply chain
- improve their organisations understanding in the importance of the environment and approaches to minimise negative impacts through staff training and, where appropriate, supplier training

Carbon reporting, reduction and circular economy

We are committed to carbon reduction and net zero. We are committed to the use of renewable energy, low-emission transport, and energy-efficient technologies. We encourage circular economy principles, including reuse, repair, and recycling.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- understand their carbon footprint and associated impact and, when required, provide associated GHG Emission data in a timely manner and work collaborative with the Council to reduce their carbon footprint.
- actively explore low-carbon alternatives, adopt circular economy principles and minimise/eliminate unnecessary waste from contract delivery including SUP and plastic pollution
- where possible buy locally to support local business and reduce supply chain carbon footprints
- be mindful of the environmental risks and impact of their business operations and where possible implement improvements to address i.e.
 - make, use and promote products made from natural, biodegradable and renewable materials and avoid the use of toxic chemicals and products that are not cruelty-free
 - avoid the use of materials which are scarce or at risk of becoming so (such as rare earth elements) and find sustainable alternatives
 - endeavour to prevent pollution or pollution incidents by conservation measures in their facilities and processes, by recycling, reducing and substituting harmful materials.
 - proactively avoid negative impact on biodiversity, minimise this where unavoidable and support and promote use of products, materials and services that protect and enhance native biodiversity
 - minimise the risk of negative water impact, with particular focus on water use, wastewater and discharges into the water system

Monitoring and reporting

The Council reserves the right to conduct compliance audits with suppliers who sign up to the Supplier Code of Conduct and are awarded Council contracts. Suppliers must fully co-operate with these audits in a timely manner following reasonable notice being afforded by the Council.

We expect and require our suppliers to:

- fully co-operate with any associated investigations/ audits in a transparent manner and without delay, inform us of any investigation, inquiry or enforcement proceedings in relation to anything pertinent in this Supplier Code of Conduct and work collaboratively with the Council to develop an agreed remedial action plan, notwithstanding any appropriate remedy provisions in agreed contract terms and conditions.
- Where appropriate, use the Council's [Raising a Concern](#) process to bring to the Council's attention a suspected danger, wrongdoing or illegality that is in the public interest.

Appendix 2 – Sustainable Initiatives

Theme	Category	Sustainable Initiative	Available points	Points using PSP	UOM	For <£1m Tender only
Ethical Procurement	Ethical Procurement Policy	Design and implementation of a new ethical procurement policy and provision of associated training for employees	10	15	Per action	✓
	Supply Chain Audits and Mapping	Annual supply chain audit and mapping exercise (for 1st tier suppliers involved with contract delivery)	15	20	Per action	✓
	VCSE Sector Support	Use of a social enterprise 'SE' in the supply chain (in relation to contract delivery)	25	N/A	Per SE used	
		Business Development & Knowledge Sharing Initiatives to support a VCSE organisation	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
	Belfast Business Promise 'BBP'	Sign up to BBP as a 'Supporter' and progress to 'Member' during the Contract Period (Belfast only suppliers)	15	N/A	Per Action	
Social Value	Employment opportunities & Initiatives to support Employability	104 employment weeks (FTE) created for Apprenticeships (Min. 2-year Apprenticeship Programme)	100	N/A	Per 104 weeks	
		52 employment weeks* (FTE) created for IG Target Groups	90	N/A	Per 52 weeks	
		12 employment weeks* (FTE) created for Trainees (paid)	15	N/A	Per 12 weeks	
		40 employment weeks* (FTE) created for 3rd level Students placements (paid)	50	N/A	Per 40 weeks	
		Employability or skills initiatives to support IG Target Groups and/or enhance employability of young people	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
		Action Plan for in-work IG Target Groups employees to cover progression, skills development and educational attainment	30	35	Delivery of Action Plan	

Theme	Category	Sustainable Initiative	Available points	Points using PSP	UOM	For <£1m Tender only
	Local Community & Vulnerable People Support	Design and implementation of a new HR equality, diversity and inclusion policy and provision of associated training for employees	10	15	Per action	✓
		Design and implementation of a new HR policies, procedures and employee contractual terms for the development, health and wellbeing of employees.	10	15	Per action	✓
		Initiatives to improve good relations between people from different religious, political, racial & ethnic backgrounds	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
		Initiatives to reduce or prevent crime (including hate crime) and/or ASB; or health related inequalities	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
		Initiatives to increase participation in sports related activities; or arts related activities.	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
		Initiatives to reduce the stigma of mental illness and increase awareness of mental health and well-being issues among employees, suppliers, customers and communities	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
		Initiatives to support BCC community projects	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
		Local initiatives to reduce poverty and inequality in the area where the contract is delivered	15	20	Per 8 hours	
Climate Action	Carbon reporting and reduction plans	Annual Scope 1&2 emissions data reporting using Council's reporting tool.	15	20	Per action	✓
		Design and publish a carbon reduction plan delivering a year-on-year carbon reduction over the Contract Period	20	25	Per action	✓
	EMS	Attain a new Environmental Management System 'EMS' accreditation during the Contract Period i.e. ISO14001 or equivalent.	20	25	Per action	✓
	Circular Economy	Support an initiative to enhance natural resources and biodiversity in BCC area	20	25	Per 8 hrs	

Theme	Category	Sustainable Initiative	Available points	Points using PSP	UOM	For <£1m Tender only
		Action plan to supporting the circular economy i.e. waste recycling/upcycling plan or donating unused equipment/items to local VCSE sector	15	20	Delivery of Action Plan	
		Circular economy training for staff working on the contract	10	15	Per 8 hrs	
		Waste management training initiatives for communities/VCSEs/ educational establishments	15	20	Per 8 hrs	
		Design and implementation of a new Single Use Plastics 'SUP' policy and provision of associated training for employees	10	20	Per action	✓
		Supply chain audit and mapping exercise (for 1st tier suppliers involved with contract delivery) to identify the use of SUP and an associated action plan to reduce SUP usage in operations	30	35	Delivery of Action Plan	
	Climate Resilience	Supply chain resilience and capacity action plan	15	20	Delivery of Action Plan	

As part of the Sustainable Reviews conducted for >£1m value requirements this list of initiatives may be reviewed and updated with additional ethical procurement, social value and/or climate action initiatives potentially added depending on the requirement and emerging best practice.

Glossary of Terms

The following terms and associated meaning are used throughout this Policy

Term	Definition/ Meaning
The Council	Belfast City Council
Below Threshold	A public contract that is below the published threshold value under the Procurement Act 2023 as published by the Cabinet Office
Contract Period	The total term of a contract including any renewal/extension options.
Belfast Agenda	Belfast Agenda is the city's community plan and its key strategic document. Published in 2017, it outlines a collective vision for the city in 2035 and the outcomes we want to achieve. It was developed by a partnership of organisations involved in delivering services across the city and has been shaped by the important input from our citizens. The Belfast Agenda includes a range of ambitions which have, and will continue, to shape the strategies and action plans of all the city's community planning partners.
GHG Emissions	Greenhouse gas emissions
Policy	This Sustainable Procurement Policy & Strategy Document
IG Target Groups	Our inclusive growth target groups as set out in our Inclusive Growth Strategy including residents not in employment, residents with low skill levels, young people not in education, employment or training (NEET); and in work, low earning individuals. A person who has a disability, who is a Looked After Child/ care leaver or a person from a minority ethnic community are also target groups.
RLW	Real Living Wage as determined by the Living Wage Foundation https://www.livingwage.org.uk
SEs	Social enterprises. Defined by the Council as a trading business – selling goods and services – but whose primary objective is to achieve social and/or environmental benefit. Social enterprises are different from those charities and voluntary organisations who do not have financial independence through trading income.
SUP	Single Use Plastics
SVPP	The Council's Social Value Procurement Policy. This Policy will supersede the SVPP.
Tenders	Any procurement exercise conducted by the Council via open competition. This currently applies to procurement exercises valued over £30k (under review). Some exceptions may apply where the procurement is conducted using an external framework e.g. Crown Commercial Services. In these cases, best endeavours will be made to apply the Policy whilst complying with the framework guidelines.
VCSEs	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises

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