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**St Albans City and District Council**

# **Sustainable Procurement Strategy**

**August 2020**  
(updated Feb 2026)

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## 1.0 Introduction

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Sustainable purchasing is about minimising the environmental and social impact of the purchases we make. It means ensuring that as an organisation we 'meet our needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis, generating benefits not only to ourselves but to society and the economy, while ensuring that we minimise any potential environment damage.

St Albans City and District Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. We are committed to doing everything we can to decarbonising our own buildings and services, and supporting the District to achieve net zero by 2030. Our Sustainability and Climate Crisis Action Plan set out our key objectives and priorities for action.

With an annual spend of around £81M on goods and services, we need to take great care to ensure that our that procurement activities are undertaken in an environmentally responsible manner, without causing harm, either locally or globally.

Procured goods and services can cause damage to the environment or public health through the extraction and processing of raw materials, manufacture of goods, distribution, use and disposal. If we don't give due regard to sustainability when making purchasing decisions, we also risk causing harm to people, wildlife and the wider environment.

Environmental Risks:	Climate change, resource depletion, air, water or land pollution, habitat destruction, impacts to species, soil erosion, diversity
Social Risks:	Fair wages, working conditions, labour standards, child labour, health and safety, working hours, equality, slavery
Profile Risks:	Legal and environmental compliance, reputational

This Sustainable Procurement Policy sets out our commitments and approach to ensuring that our procurement activities are undertaken in an environmentally responsible way, to minimise impacts where practicable. It helps to ensure that we are:

1. Encouraging high environmental standards in the supply and disposal chain.
2. Minimising harm to people or the environment, by the Council or its suppliers.
3. Working towards our goal to combat the climate emergency and reduce our corporate emissions and encourage the reduction of community emissions, to net zero by 2030.

4. Protecting the Council's reputation with the public and enhance our corporate image as a responsible community leader.
5. Achieving legislative compliance.
6. Ensuring we are using financial and material resources efficiently, reducing waste and providing value for money by evaluating whole life costs.

## 1.1 National Policy & Legislation

The UK [Greening Government programme](#) sets out commitments for driving sustainable operations and procurement across Government Departments. One of these commits the Government to buying more sustainable and efficient products and engaging with its suppliers to understand and reduce the impacts of its supply chain. This programme doesn't explicitly apply to Local Authorities, but we are encouraged to apply the same principles of sustainable procurement.

The [Government Buying Standards](#) help simplify sustainable procurement by establishing technical specifications for products that address their sustainability impacts and minimise their whole-life cost.

Under the [Public Services \(Social Value\) Act 2012](#), we are required to consider at the pre-procurement stage, how what is to be procured may improve the environmental, social and economic well-being of the area.

The [Energy Efficiency Directive, 2012](#) requires central Government departments to purchase highly energy efficient products, services and buildings within public procurement for contracts above the OJEU threshold. Public bodies are asked to follow the example of central government.

The [European Commission's Public Procurement Strategy, 2017](#), focuses on six strategic policy priorities. One of these is to provide additional guidance to ensure wider uptake of innovative, green, and social procurement.

The UK Government's [Plan for Public Procurement](#) commits the public sector to buying locally sourced, seasonal food where possible through a new simplified food and drink buying standard.

The [Timber and Timber Products \(Placing on the Market\) Regulations 2013 and the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Regulations 2012 \(as amended\)](#) are in place to ensure the legality of timber bought or sold via traders.

## 2.0 Sustainable Procurement Policy

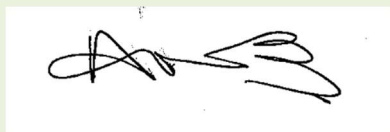
St Albans City and District Council recognises, and is committed to, incorporating the principles of sustainable purchasing throughout its procurement functions. Purchasing decisions have major socio-economic and environmental implications both locally and globally. The Council commits to taking the necessary steps to ensure that its purchasing decisions minimise environmental or social risks.

We will achieve this through the following commitments:

- Council staff and elected Members will be encouraged to specify environmentally preferable products and services that reflect up-to-date specifications and consider whole life costs
- Challenging environmental criteria will be specified in the award of contracts as set out in Appendix 1
- A [Sustainability Impact Assessment](#) is required for new projects, policies and purchases over £25,000, to ensure that correct specifications have been met. This will require approval by the Sustainability Team before being signed off by the relevant Director, Councillor or Project Manager
- Reasonable efforts will be taken to reduce the purchase of new products by reusing, repairing or refurbishing existing products where possible
- Contractors and suppliers will be encouraged to supply products and services, that meet or exceed the Council's Sustainable Procurement specifications
- Contractors, suppliers and recipients of Council funding, will be required to operate to the environmental standards *at least* equivalent to the Council's own standards
- We will provide training to staff and elected members on the requirements of the Council's Sustainable Procurement Strategy and specifications on a regular basis
- We will comply with all relevant legislation
- We will dispose of any unavoidable waste sustainably

This Sustainable Procurement Policy applies within all Council departments to the procurement of goods and services, tender of new contracts, the design of new buildings and the renovation and maintenance of buildings and estates.

Signed by



Amanda Foley

**Chief Executive**

**St Albans City & District Council**

### 3.0 Implementation and Monitoring

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It is the responsibility of all Council staff to apply the sustainability standards that have been set out in this policy both to their contracts and general day to day procurement.

Support is available from the Sustainability Team and Procurement Team.

On occasion, a balance will need to be struck between sustainability and cost. Where the cost of buying a more sustainable product is unreasonably high then a decision should be made by the Director as how to proceed.

To ensure that budget holders and individual employees adhere to the specifications and commitments contained within the Sustainable Procurement Policy, the Council will raise awareness of this policy through the staff website, newsletters, training and information events.

The guidance contained within this documentation will be reviewed every 3 years. This will allow us to review best practice on particular products and services and to consider other policies and procedures adopted by the Council.

Department contracts and purchase orders will be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that the policy is being adhered to.

### 4.0 Making Purchasing Decisions

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This section provides general guidance to staff making procurement decisions.

<b>Identify the impacts, risks and solutions at the outset</b>	<p>At the planning stage we will consider the potential impacts of the items, services or works which we will need to procure. We will undertake a Sustainability Impact Assessment for large purchases and contracts over £25,000.</p> <p>We will think about:</p> <p>Supply contracts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The environmental impact of materials used to make the product</li><li>▪ The impact of the production processes</li><li>▪ The energy and water consumption of the product during use</li><li>▪ Durability/lifespan of the product</li><li>▪ Opportunities for recycling/reusing the product at the end of life</li><li>▪ The packaging and transportation of the product</li></ul> <p>Service contracts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The technical expertise of staff to carry out the contract in an environmentally friendly way</li><li>▪ The products/materials used in carrying out the service</li><li>▪ Management procedures in place to minimise environmental impacts</li><li>▪ The energy and water consumed, and waste generated in carrying out the service</li></ul>
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	<p>Works contracts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In addition to the above considerations, works contracts may have significant environmental impacts, for example in respect of land use or traffic planning that will be considered.</li> </ul>
<b>Choose greener products</b>	<p>We will attempt to minimise impacts by selecting products, materials or services which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reused, recycled or made from renewable raw materials</li> <li>Energy, water and resource efficient</li> <li>Fairly traded</li> <li>Free from polluting substances known to be damaging to health or the environment</li> <li>Certified by a recognised environmental label, standard or trademark e.g. Forest Stewardship Council</li> </ul>
<b>Reduce unnecessary resource use</b>	<p>We will purchase only essential items to conserve resources, reduce pollution and reduce waste. We will consider if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The items and their quantities are essential</li> <li>The need could be met through existing products or equipment</li> <li>The item can be hired or borrowed</li> <li>There are longer-life products available</li> </ul>
<b>Consider how to reduce impacts from distribution and delivery</b>	<p>Goods and their individual components, may be distributed over thousands of miles, adding to congestion and infrastructure requirements, and releasing pollutants that impact air quality and the climate. We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek products that can be sourced nearer to home</li> <li>Consolidate orders to reduce the number of deliveries needed</li> <li>Question whether we can avoid products transported by air</li> </ul>
<b>Consider how to reduce waste</b>	<p>Disposing materials to landfill wastes valuable resources, damages the local environment and contributes to climate change through the production of methane. We will minimise waste by following the waste hierarchy and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considering the products lifecycle and what will happen to it after it has been used</li> <li>Selecting products that are long-lasting and durable, preventing the need for frequent replacements or maintenance</li> <li>Selecting products which can be reused, recycled or refilled</li> <li>Asking suppliers to remove and recycle the old product</li> <li>Requiring contractors to have comprehensive waste management programmes in place</li> </ul>

<p><b>Consider whole life costs</b></p>	<p>Although some environmentally preferable products may be more expensive at the outset, they can be cheaper in the long-term for example through reduced maintenance or energy costs. We will consider the costs and savings associated with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ On-going running and maintenance of the item</li> <li>▪ Licencing</li> <li>▪ Disposal</li> </ul>
<p><b>Avoid greenwash</b></p>	<p>An increasing number of companies market themselves as being green or sustainable, but don't always have the evidence to back this up. They may claim an exaggerated level of energy efficiency or focus on a relatively minor environmental impact. We will avoid greenwash by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Familiarising ourselves with the environmental impacts of the product or service and best practice standards</li> <li>▪ Asking for appropriate proof from the supplier for the environmental performance they have stated</li> <li>▪ Reviewing 3<sup>rd</sup> party environmental labels and certifications</li> </ul>
<p><b>Welcome opportunities for visibility</b></p>	<p>It is beneficial, both to the Council's organisation and to the environment, to making sustainability improvements which are visible. High profile changes such as switching to electric vehicles, installing renewables or offering organic packaging free food, demonstrates to everyone that the Council cares. It enhances our reputation as being a positive social and environmental leader and encourages others to follow suite.</p>

## 5.0 Contract Specification, Tendering and Evaluation

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### 5.1 Contract Specification

Environmental and sustainability criteria must be built into the contract at the specification stage for all contracts in accordance with EU and UK legislation. The general statement given below will be included in the Standard Terms and Conditions of all new contracts where applicable. A Sustainability Impact Assessment should be carried out for all new policies, contracts and large purchases over £25k. This will require sign off by the Sustainability Projects Officer and Director. As part of this process the Council's Sustainability Projects Officer is available to provide advice on appropriate sustainability criteria and scoring methods for tender and contractual documents. Enough time should be allocated to this within the tender timetable.

The tender evaluation process for contracts over the EU threshold and falling within the 'High Impact' Categories (see Section 6.0) should have a minimum 5% of the total score allocated to environmental and sustainability criteria. Where you are using the restricted method of tendering (i.e. Pre-Qualification stage + tender to restricted number of companies) you may want to ask for environmental/sustainability information at the award stage of the tender, however you will not be able to ask the same questions at both the selection and award stages of a tender process.

The Council will review its contract specifications and assessment process to ensure compliance with changing environmental legislation and an on-going reflection of best practice.

### **General Specification for Environmental Sustainability**

The Council is committed to ensuring that sustainability is integrated into all activities, purchases and decision-making processes within the Council. Our policies and activities are highlighted in our [Sustainability Strategy and Net Zero Action Plan](#), [Sustainability Impact Assessment Process](#) and [Sustainable Procurement Strategy](#).

The Council requires the Contractor to demonstrate the steps taken to design the service so as to ensure:

- a) Conservation of resources such as energy, fuel, water and materials
- b) Reduction of waste through minimizing consumption and maximising opportunities to reuse, recycle, compost waste and adopt circular economy practices where practical
- c) Emissions of greenhouse gases are minimised, and the plan to decarbonise the service
- d) Reduction of emissions of air pollutants and noise
- e) That buildings and equipment achieve a high standard of environmental performance
- f) Goods and materials are procured sustainably, minimising adverse effects to people, the environment or biodiversity.

### **Annual Energy and Fuel Data**

The Contractor may be requested to provide annual energy and fuel use data from the buildings and transport used in providing services to, or on behalf of the Council, in accordance with any annual greenhouse gas reporting requirements. Full instructions are set out in the [Supplier Guidance Document](#).

The Contractor will be requested to provide details and evidence of fuel and energy reduction activities that the Contractor has implemented during the reporting period.

### **To apply the principles of sustainable procurement in your specification, you can:**

- Use transparent criteria that are specific and objectively quantifiable.
- Specify in terms of performance or functional requirements, which can include environmental aspects. Focus on the outcome or functionality desired (e.g. reduced emissions) and give suppliers the opportunity to be innovative and to suggest the most environmentally preferable solutions, and to find the most cost-effective ways of meeting environmental objectives.
- Ensure that environmental performance criteria are included as they relate to the contract subject area and technical specification (performance based or functional).
- Include environmental considerations in the contract performance clauses, for instance in the transport, waste disposal and staff training and competency sections.
- Specify the primary materials to be used (e.g. must use recycled or recyclable materials) and how they are produced (e.g. use of organic ingredients).
- Include environmental issues within best value for money considerations or 'economically most advantageous tender'.
- Ask for Eco-label or Environmental Management System standards but cannot ask for a specific eco-labels or system. Instead set the level of certification you wish to achieve and ask for this "or equivalent".
- Exclude companies that have acted against environmental legislation or regulation.
- Exclude companies based on track record if they failed to meet their environmental requirements on previous contracts.
- Select suppliers and set environmental criteria based on environmental technical competence.
- Define the subject matter of a contract in relation to environmental issues but can't ask for anything which doesn't relate to the contract. – explain
- Reward exceptional performance. For example, you might set a minimum standard carbon emission of vehicles. If the tenderer goes even further than that standard they could be awarded extra points.
- Assess suppliers based on their recognition of the main social and environmental risks involved with their service and how they have identified adequate measures to manage them.

## **5.2 Working with suppliers**

The Council will promote the implementation of this policy, and any other environmental and social considerations, throughout the contract management and monitoring process. We will encourage contractors to improve sustainability performance by:

- Setting targets and performance indicators related to sustainable purchasing objectives to enable them to achieve continual environmental improvement.
- Encouraging and recognising innovation in reducing environmental and social impacts.
- Encouraging suppliers to explore alternative, more sustainable products and services.
- Considering the introduction of incentive systems to ensure objectives of the Council are met, even where it is not in the financial interests of the contractor.
- Undertaking a Sustainability Impact Assessment where large purchases or additions to the service are made.

## APPENDIX 1: SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT SPECIFICATIONS

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The Council have initiated a range of positive actions with regards to sustainable procurement which are highlighted below. Sustainable procurement demands gradual and continuous improvements and aiming for best practice is the most effective way to ensure progress.

The following sections provide guidance for staff purchasing items and highlights the criteria which should be applied to each category of purchase and contract.

Our large service contracts are associated with the greatest impacts. Improvements will need to be voluntary until specifications, designed to reduce these impacts, are incorporated to the tendering processes.

### Quick Links:

[Appliances](#)

[Batteries](#)

[Catering Service](#)

[Cleaning Services and Products](#)

[Computing](#)

[Construction, Building Maintenance and Repairs](#)

[Furniture](#)

[Herbicides, Pesticides and grounds maintenance chemicals](#)

[Horticulture](#)

[Lighting](#)

[Mobile Phones](#)

[Paper, Paper Products and Printed Materials](#)

[Pest Control](#)

[Plastics](#)

[Promotional Items](#)

[Stationary](#)

[Utilities – Energy and Water](#)

[Vehicles and Transport](#)

[Waste and Recycling](#)

[Wood and Timber](#)

### 1. Appliances

Problem: The Council purchases appliances such as fridges, freezers, ovens and cookers for our housing properties, offices and public buildings. These consume significant amounts of energy and/or water throughout their lifetime and use resources in their manufacture and transport. Investing in energy efficient products makes financial and environmental sense in the long-term as the energy savings pay for the higher initial outlay.

The Council will:

- Purchase fridge and freezers that are rated A++. An average A++ rated fridge provides an extra £14 saving/per year in electricity compared to an A-rated product.

- All other appliances purchased (e.g. cookers, ovens and dishwashers) will be A-rated or higher. A-rated products have a much lower energy consumption that saves money over the long term.

## 2. Batteries

Problem: Batteries are an inefficient way to use energy, using 50 times as much energy in their production as they give out. Batteries contain heavy metals such as: lead, cadmium and mercury. These are toxic to human health and must be disposed of through dedicated battery collection points, to ensure these materials don't escape into the soil or air and affect human and wildlife health.

The Council will:

- Avoid using products which rely on batteries. Preference will be given to rechargeable products, solar or mains power wherever possible
- Safely dispose of batteries using recycling facilities provided in the District Offices, local shops or via Building Services.
- Explore solar charging as an option for our outdoor power needs, such as street bins and lighting.

## 3. Catering Services

Problem: The Council provides hot and cold drinks at Council offices, buys in refreshments for meetings and events. In 2018/19 we spent over £12,400 on catering services. We also provide catering services to the public from our buildings such as the leisure centres and museums, through third party agreements and contracts. The direct and indirect impacts of this include water and chemical use in the food production, possible social impacts to those people producing the food, emissions and fuel use in transportation, materials used in packaging and waste production.

The Council will:

- Actively seek opportunities to reduce waste from our existing refreshment and catering suppliers. New refreshment and catering contracts will be required to demonstrate comprehensive plans to reduce the use of single-use, non-recyclable items such as cutlery, trays, cups and films, as well as food and packaging waste.
- Require catering suppliers to increase provision of healthy, organic, vegetarian, vegan, fair-trade, British and seasonal products and options. Menus should be designed to reflect the natural growing season for the UK. In line with the [Committee on Climate Change Report](#), we will ensure that we are able to provide fully plant-based meals via all our catering options.
- Prohibit the direct use of eggs, including liquid and powdered, which are sourced from suppliers who use cages. All forms of eggs directly used should be free range.

- Require meat and dairy food products to meet and accreditation or quality standard equivalent to RSPCA Freedom Food.
- Prohibit the direct use of palm oil unless it is from a sustainably supplied source. Where possible we aim to avoid products that do not use sustainably sourced palm oil.
- Only provide fair-trade tea and coffee across our buildings and services.
- Work towards a goal of eliminating our use of single-use plastic items. Disposable cups are only to be used for visitors where there are no alternatives available. Instead we provide water jugs and glasses at meetings.
- Make available recycling facilities for food, paper, cans and plastic bottles and containers for meetings and events where catering is provided.

#### 4. Cleaning Services and Products

Problem: Choosing cleaning products which will both clean and minimise the impact on the environment is challenging as many products on the market contain toxic or hazardous chemicals. Cleaning products such as detergents, sanitary cleaners, dishwasher detergents and handwashing, often contain agents that are classified as harmful to human health. This can impact on the occupational health of cleaners and staff. When used in the wrong way these chemicals can reach the natural environment where they have a hazardous effect on aquatic life. Phosphates can get into rivers and cause algae which deprive the water of oxygen and can kill aquatic life. Optical brighteners, synthetic perfumes and colourings –are slow to biodegrade and can be toxic to aquatic and animal life. Disposable products and packaging can also lead to unnecessary waste.

The Council have contracts for the cleaning of offices, public buildings and streets. We also purchase products for staff use include handwashing and sanitization. In 2018/19 we spent £5,378 on cleaning products.

##### The Council will:

- Require our cleaning contractors to use products that are phosphate-free and carry the European Ecolabel (or equivalent) and that the ingredients of all products supplied meet the biodegradability conditions outlined in the EU Detergents Regulation 648/2004. Bidders will be asked to supply a list of the products that will be used, together with proof of compliance with the above specifications. At the end of every year we will request a balance sheet to be submitted by the contractor indicating the name and quantity of the cleaning products used during the term.
- Insist that products are free of EDTA (ethylene-diamine-tetra-acetate), NTA (nitrilotriacetic acid), optical brighteners, chlorine bleaches, synthetic perfumes or colours, VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds), paradichlorobenzene or APEs (alkyl phenol ethoxylates).
- Ask contractors to reduce the use of some products unless necessary. Several products typically used in cleaning services are often used too frequently or may even be unnecessary from a hygiene perspective. These products include toilet

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bowl freshener, cistern additives, deodorising blocks for urinals, air fresheners, chemical drain cleaners, floor finish based on water insoluble polymers, disinfectants, aerosol cans and propellants.

- Encourage contractors to use chemical free cleaning methods such as micro-fibre cloths, instead of chemical cleaners where health and hygiene is not compromised. Microfibre cloths are very low cost and last years through machine washing, while a 500ml general all-purpose cleaner can cost £2-£5 litre).
- Ask contractors to demonstrate their capacity to carry out the service in an environmentally sound manner. This should include evidence of the regular training of staff on health, safety and environmental aspects of cleaning activities, together with specific environmental management measures which are routinely applied in cleaning contracts.
- Require contractors to use energy efficient and bagless vacuum cleaners or other mechanical equipment where possible to minimise waste.
- Require street cleansing contractors to demonstrate minimisation of water consumption such as grey water recycling.

## 5. Computing

Problem: The Council provide IT equipment such as laptops and monitors to around 420 staff. We also purchase networking kit and servers. Departments are required to justify their need for IT equipment by presenting a Business Case to the IT department. IT makes our lives easier and positively it helps us to reduce paper and emissions as we can transport documents and hold meetings online. The negative impacts include resource use, use of rare materials often obtained through in conflict, waste of old equipment including toxic materials such as lead in CRT screens, mercury in LCD screens, copper and lead in circuitry, and cadmium, lead and lead in batteries. All electronic IT equipment should be safely disposed of to prevent escape of these elements to the environment.

### The Council will:

- Purchase laptops that meet the highest energy-efficiency class available for the product category at that time. Currently our equipment meets the Energy Star 6.1, EPEAT Gold criteria. The packaging of this equipment is made from mushroom sources.
- Extend warranties for computers to 4 years to increase the working life of electronic equipment.
- Wherever possible, offer unwanted equipment to local non-profit organisations via (contact the Sustainability Projects Officer for assistance).
- Dispose of any remaining equipment safely according to the Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment Regulations.
- Not use screen savers and have enabled automatic power-off functions.

- Ensure that all IT equipment purchases adhere to the Council's Conflict Mineral Policy.

## **6. Construction, Building Maintenance, Refurbishment and Repairs**

Problem: The construction industry has a major impact on the environment through the use of land, materials and the on-going environmental impact of the building's use. The construction and building maintenance function of the Council has been identified to be a high-risk area both environmentally and financially. This is compounded by the fact that the Council works with a number of contractors at any one time. Having a clear Sustainable Construction standard will help Council staff to define the core approach required from all contractors, and thus ensure a level playing field.

Any specialist project management, architectural or construction companies involved in large Council construction projects are equally responsible for applying the requirements of this, and our Sustainable Construction Policy (at the time of writing this is in development).

There may be interest-free finance schemes available which can fund measures that reduce energy and carbon emissions in the longer-term. For further details speak to the Sustainability Projects Officer. The Council also has an Invest to save fund to allow measures that bring a longer-term saving, to be progressed.

### The Council will:

- Ensure that high energy efficiency standards for heating, cooling, ventilation and hot water systems and electronic devices are integrated at the design stage. Currently we strive to achieve, as a minimum, an equivalent of either Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) of 'Very Good' for non-residential developments and a minimum of BRE Home Quality Mark 3 for residential units. Residential units will be built to a minimum EPC of B.
- Incorporate passive design principles to minimise the need for lighting, heating and cooling.
- Reduce overall water consumption through the installation of high-end water saving technologies such as rainwater harvesting and grey water use. We prohibit the purchase of water fed urinals and single flush toilets.
- Incorporate on-site renewable and low carbon technologies such as Combined Heat and Power (CHP), Solar Photovoltaic, Solar Thermal, Biomass, Ground Source Heat Pumps and Air Source Heat Pumps, to significantly reduce the need for fossil fuels.
- Include energy monitoring & targeting systems in all new non-residential buildings over a certain size.
- Consider the environmental profile of construction materials. Preference will be given to materials that are sustainably produced, recycled, non-toxic, low maintenance and have a long lifespan, over those which are cheaper or more desirable.

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- Minimise the amount of waste sent to landfill during construction, demolition and on-going usage through efficient use of materials, reuse and recycling. Site Waste Management Plans must be completed for each site and measures implemented to reduce waste sent to landfill. We will encourage contractors to recycle at least 85% of construction waste.
  - Always carry out works in line with the 'Considerate Construction Scheme'.

*See also: Wood and Timber*

## **7. Furniture**

Problem: In 2018/19 we spent over £6,000 on furniture. Furniture uses natural resources such as wood, MDF and plywood which can contribute to deforestation and use energy in their manufacture. In addition, they use chemicals for glues, colouring, varnishing and protecting the finished product. The manufacture of furniture, and ongoing use of furniture can release toxic chemicals, such as VOCs (volatile organic compounds) such as formaldehyde and PFCs (perfluorochemicals), into outdoor and indoor air affecting air quality.

### The Council will:

- Check the availability of spare furniture in the Council (contact Building Services), and refurbish existing furniture, before purchasing any new furniture. Try: <http://gorestorerepair.co.uk/go-restore-locations/st-albans/> or <http://www.ecomaster.co.uk/furniture-repair>
- Offer unwanted furniture to other departments or buildings for use, stored for future use, offered to staff or offered to schools, community groups and charities through our own contacts or through local reuse networks such as Freecycle and Furniture Reuse Network. (contact Sustainability Officer).
- Aim to purchase furniture from local businesses and those that use UK sourced, or recycled materials.
- Seek furniture which is certified as sustainable (e.g. Greenguard) and/or made from sustainable materials such as bamboo. Bamboo is extremely eco-friendly because it is fast growing making it easily harvestable; it also releases 35% more oxygen than forest trees; and is extremely durable and strong.
- Whilst uncommon in office furniture, not purchase building materials or furniture made from hardwoods unless they are certified as being from a sustainably managed source.
- Not purchase furniture which has been treated with hazardous materials such as pentachloro-phenol, lyndane or tributyltin-oxide.

*See also: Wood and Timber*

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## 8. Herbicides, Pesticides and grounds maintenance chemicals

Problem: The Council's service providers use herbicides when maintaining housing parks, greenspaces, housing and leisure sites to prevent the invasion of plants to public spaces and walkways. We spent around £65,000 on weed control during 2018/19.

Most herbicides and pesticides are toxic to humans and wildlife, especially when washed by rainwater into rivers, streams and underground waterways. This pollution can be fatal to aquatic life and insects. It can also impact drinking water. Herbicides and pesticides in the environment originate from four main sources; agriculture, railway embankment spraying, local authority use and domestic homes and gardens.

The Green Flag Awards states that "in the interests of protecting the health of users and staff on the site, pesticides and chemical fertilisers should not be used. Minimal use may be acceptable as part of an Integrated Pest Management strategy and a full explanation is given [in the guidance]."

### The Council will:

- Follow the lead of other countries (e.g. Holland and France), and local authorities (e.g. Croydon, Hammersmith and Fulham), who have committed to ending the use of chemicals in parks management. We will request our existing contractor eliminates use of chemicals in district parks unless there is a particular need, for example in the case of Japanese Knotweed or other invasive species.
- Require the Grounds Maintenance contractor to take targeted action to achieve annual reductions in the quantity of herbicides and pesticides used. Contractors may use specialist systems to target herbicide application (i.e. infra-red systems) and will be encouraged to use biological controls and naturally occurring pesticides and fungicides wherever possible.
- Allow and accept some weed growth in allocated places as this can provide numerous benefits for wildlife and pollution control.
- Only permit herbicides with the prior approval of the Council where there is deemed to be no appropriate alternative. Systematic herbicides, which act through contact, are preferred for environmental reasons as they break down before they reach watercourses. Pesticides on the UK Red List and EU Black and Grey lists of hazardous substances should not be used.
- Discourage weeds through preventative techniques e.g. weed-free substrates and weed control barriers for paved areas; fallowing, weed-control barriers, and mulches for planted areas and around new trees; and fallowing and using weed-free seed or turves of a suitable seed mix for fine turf.
- Require contractors responsible for pest control to demonstrate their commitment to reducing chemical use and alternative techniques such as thermal, mechanical or biological treatments.

## 9. Horticulture and grounds maintenance

Problem: The Council's Ground's Maintenance contractor is responsible for maintaining the local parks and green spaces, off-road cycle trails, cemeteries, closed churchyards and land around Council Housing. The impacts associated with horticulture and grounds

maintenance include chemical use, destruction of peat big habitats, ecological impacts from replacing natural areas with ornamental plants of low wildlife benefit, impacts from the production of ornamental plants, noise and fuel use from machinery and transportation around the district.

#### The Council will

- Require contractors to demonstrate ongoing reductions in fuel used for transport and machinery.
- Compost all green waste for use on Council greenspaces and allotment sites.
- Select permanent, native, bee-friendly plantings to replace seasonal planting wherever possible and appropriate.
- Plants should be delivered in biodegradable containers or the pots must be reused or returned to the supplier.
- Use low noise, low emission and low consumption machinery and work towards phasing out fossil fuels entirely in the longer-term.
- Use, wherever possible, non-potable water, install efficient irrigation systems, and apply different measures to reduce water use such as mulching, plant arrangements due to their water needs,
- Incorporate climate change adaptation measures across the service (i.e. use of drought and flood resistant plants). We will be trialling the use of year-round sustainable perennial plantings with a view to extending this to roundabouts and parks if successful.
- Prohibit the direct use of peat or peat-based products. The exception to this is where there is peat content in purchased plants. Peat bogs provide a unique and wildlife rich habitat. They are also amongst the most damaged and threatened habitats.
- Lubricant oils should be biodegradable and non-toxic.
- Grazing regimes can be encouraged as an alternative to cutting where viable.

*See also Herbicides and Pesticides; Wood and Timber.*

## **10. Lighting**

Problem: LED lightbulbs are the most energy efficient bulbs available, using 90% less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs. They also last 8 times as long as a regular light bulb and are much cheaper over the whole lifetime despite higher initial cost. Investing in the highest efficiency lighting makes financial sense in the long term. By contrast, Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs) use 60%-80% less energy than incandescent bulbs, while halogens use 20-30% less.

#### The Council will:

- Install LED lighting (or better if it exists), as standard to all new buildings, refurbishments or when existing fittings reach their end of life.

- Prohibit the purchase of incandescent light bulbs unless there is absolutely no other alternative.
- Install sensors wherever possible to reduce energy consumption and minimise wastage by occupants.
- Use lighting controls to further reduce energy consumption and encourage the use of dimmable ballasts where circumstances allow
- Offer working bulbs to other building and where disposal is necessary, we will dispose of lighting as per hazardous waste guidelines.
- Investigate options to use solar powered Christmas lighting during seasonal celebrations.

## 11. Mobile phones

The Problem: As a Council we contract out the supply and maintenance of approximately 300 mobile phones for staff every year. The two main areas of environmental significance for mobile phones concern their batteries and short life-span. Mobile phone technology is continually advancing, meaning that phones, along with their accessories, become outdated very quickly, creating large volumes of waste.

Mobile phones contain hazardous metals and chemicals such as arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, copper, lead, nickel, zinc and volatile organic compounds, which can contaminate soil, watercourse and groundwater from processing or incorrect disposal. These substances are harmful to human health and aquatic life if not disposed of properly. Furthermore, these chemicals are often sourced from areas of conflict.

The Council will:

- Take back used phones at the end of their life so that the data can be wiped, and the phones recycled.
- Over the next few years, explore options in future to allow the safe use of personal mobile phones for work purposes. This will significantly reduce the number of phones used by Council staff but has impacts on the IT team's time as they would need to deal with different phone issues and security.

*See also Computing*

## 12. Paper, Paper Products and Printing

The Problem: The impacts associated with paper consumption include habitat destruction and resultant loss of biodiversity (from virgin wood pulp), chemical use, energy and water use, with associated emissions, during paper production, emissions and fuel use during transportation and waste production at the end of life.

It takes a lot of energy, water and chemicals to produce paper. This can create pollution. The bleaching process used to whiten paper, often uses chlorine gas and produces dioxins which can pollute water. There are now different processes available, which use

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oxygen, hydrogen, sodium peroxide, soap or more efficient pulping techniques and eliminate the need to use chlorine bleach.

Some virgin paper is produced from timber grown on intensively managed, single species plantations, which require high levels of chemical fertilizers and pesticides to maintain growth. These methods can lead to loss of topsoil, lowering of the water table and loss of biodiversity.

Whilst we have significantly reduced paper use across our services over the past 10 years by moving to electronic systems, we still directly purchase around 13 tonnes of paper per year. This figure excludes outsourced printing and postage such as the Council Tax mailing or Community News publication. Whilst we do not have access to weights of these mailings, we spent £145k on external printing last year so this represents a significant amount of both paper and ink. In total we spent around £279,000 on paper, printing and reprographics in 2018/19.

The Council will:

- Only purchase 100% white recycled paper (80gsm) for printing, letterheads and photocopying.
  - Only order paper products which are Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) certified as this demonstrates the legality of the virgin pulp element. This ensures that that our consumption is not causing unintended consequences to the natural environment or breaking the law. Paper may additionally have the Euro Ecolabels or Der Blauer Engel certificates.
  - Only order chlorine-free, uncoated paper. Silk, matt and gloss are not ordered by the print room as these have additional impact during production and recycling processes.
  - Seek environmentally friendly external printers who can offer competitive prices for printing on recycled paper. Currently the cost to print on recycled paper can be as much as 50% higher. Our objective is that all paper-based publicity materials and documents, printed externally, should have a minimum recycled content of 75%. The non-recycled component should be from FSC or PEFC approved sources. They will also be as thin as possible. All public and printed documents should be labelled to clearly show the level of recycled content wherever possible.
  - Work towards gathering data from external printers on quantities of paper used.
  - Avoid using new plastic or padded envelopes wherever possible. Cardboard envelopes can be a better alternative.
  - Continue to implement our Working Paperless campaign to encourage staff to use their laptops instead of printing.
  - Provide paper and cardboard recycling throughout the offices. Council employees and Members are encouraged to view, send and store information electronically instead of using printed materials. Confidential waste is also sent for recycling.
  - Specify paper disposables such as toilet paper and hand towels that are made from 100% recycled fibres.
  - Purchase only A-rated printers and Photocopiers which can work efficiently using 100% recycled paper and have a sleep mode. These will be set to duplex black and white by default and will go to sleep in-between uses.
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- Ensure that when procuring contracts for printers and photocopiers, only suppliers who can accept the used consumables back for recycling as part of the contract, will be selected.

### **13. Plastics**

We produce and use plastics at a profound rate, yet we have little means to deal with the waste. Whilst some plastics, such as bottles and food trays, can be recycled, there are many types that cannot. These end up either buried in the ground where they leach into the soil and ground water, burned where they pollute the air or littering the environment where they affect wildlife.

Since the UK doesn't have the infrastructure to reprocess all the dry recyclable plastics we produce, plastic sent for recycling is traded internationally. Plastic from St Albans is mostly sent to Europe for reprocessing. However, we cannot fail to ignore the fact that huge quantities of plastics, from global use, are still being dumped into the ocean. By 2050 it is predicted that there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish.

As a Council we are working towards banning the use of single use plastic items (and Styrofoam) in the Council Offices and their use in facilities licensed by the Council and at any event on Council property or supported by the Council.

#### The Council will:

- Avoid buying single use plastics (and Styrofoam containers) for use in Council Offices, events or services.
- Audit all our services to identify and gradually replace any single-use plastic items. Managers should not be authorising the purchase of single-use plastic products unless there is consensus (including from the Sustainability Officer) that there is no feasible alternative at present.
- Work towards banning the use or sale of products using single-use plastics (or Styrofoam containers) in premises licensed by the Council and at events run on Council property or within Council markets.
- Provide recycling bins for plastic bottles and containers, at all Council Offices and large events.

### **14. Promotional Items**

Problem: Promotional items are purchased for use at public events, campaigns and conferences. Some of these products are made of plastic and potentially only single use. It is important that we demonstrate our own commitment to sustainability by ensuring that the products used serve an on-going practical purpose to the end user, are environmentally friendly and are likely to be used for a long time.

#### The Council will:

- Prohibit the use of balloons due to their high environmental impacts and limited lifespan. Instead of balloons we encourage staff to use flags, bunting, tissue pom poms, banners, paper streamers and bubbles.

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- Ensure that marketing messages used on promotional give-away items do not limit the lifespan of the product. We will avoid the use of dates, specific places or events on products, therefore enabling left-over items to be used for other promotions and campaigns.
  - Mark environmentally preferable promotional items as such to promote good practice to the public (i.e. 100% recycled).
  - Suggested items do not produce waste and are of a high enough quality to improve their prospect of being used in the long term. Ideas include seed bombs, reusable cups and wax wrap.
  - Explore options to replace pull up banners with digital banners to reduce waste.

## 15. Stationary

Problem: As a Council we spend approximately £9,000 per year on stationary. Since we are in direct control of the office supplies we purchase, it is one of the easiest areas to improve. In addition, the use of recycled paper and environmentally friendly alternatives, sends a strong and visible message to staff that the Council take sustainability seriously.

The Council will:

- Review the 20 most common stationary items purchased and restrict purchases to the most sustainable and cost-effective choices available within the stationary contract.
- Ensure that staff in the main offices, and in separate buildings, purchase:
  - Adhesives and corrective fluids that are water-based and solvent-free.
  - Notebooks, pads and diaries that are recycled.
  - Retractable pens should be purchased instead of pens with lids.
- Delivery of stationary is restricted to twice per week to reduce transportation impacts.
- Staff are encouraged to reduce the need to purchase stationary by offering unwanted stationary to others on STAN.

## 16. Utilities – Energy and Water

Problem: The burning of fossil fuels to provide energy is one of the main causes of climate change. Emissions of greenhouse gases also degrade air quality, create acid rain. The extraction and processing of fossil fuels from the earth can pollute air and waterways, lead to loss of topsoil and erosion, damages local flora and fauna, requires large amounts of energy and water, produces hazardous waste and releases chemicals into the atmosphere.

Nuclear power doesn't create the same greenhouse gases but instead poses a high risk to local and global environments through the release of radioactive materials. The ongoing storage of radioactive waste is a global problem.

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Renewable energy sources such as solar, wind and air or ground source heat pumps, on the other hand, provide a clean, safe and sustainable alternative to fossil fuels and nuclear energy.

The Council will:

- Purchase our electricity from a certified renewable source, ensuring that this is not a 'greenwash' tariff.
- In the longer term, aim to phase out use of the use of gas and non-renewable heat sources.
- Bring all water bills onto a central contract to enable central monitoring and verification.
- Purchase verified carbon offsets for our unavoidable emissions by 2027.

## **17. Vehicles and Transport**

Problem: The manufacture and end-use of vehicle contributes to air pollution and climate change. Air pollution is known to be a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and certain cancers and can exacerbate conditions such as asthma, heart and lung disease. In children these chemicals affect long-term mental development and lung function. It is estimated that 514 premature deaths occur in Hertfordshire every year due to air pollution. Traffic noise also adversely affects health and concentration.

Road transport is the main source of air pollution in St Albans district. Because of our high level of traffic and congestion, levels of some pollutants (nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter) exceed annual mean levels required by UK legislation, in three designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in the District.

The Council maintains a very small general vehicle fleet, but we are also responsible for purchasing vehicles for some of our large contracts (e.g. recycling). Emissions from vehicles owned by the Council and our largest sub-contracted services, contribute to the Council's overall greenhouse gas emissions. Purchasing the most efficient vehicles available and encouraging the reduction of transport required in the delivery of products and services from our suppliers, is essential for the achievement of our emissions reduction targets.

The Council will:

**Council Fleet**

- Seek to gradually phase out fossil fuel vehicles from our existing fleet, moving to electric or hydrogen powered vehicles wherever possible.
- Encourage Council officers and members to reduce vehicle use through a variety of Green Travel schemes as detailed within the Sustainability Strategy. This includes plans to introduce electric pool cars for staff and improve provision for cycling.
- Consider the environmental impact and ongoing cost when purchasing new vehicles. All vehicles will be purchased through the OGC Buying Solutions vehicle

purchase framework agreement unless the vehicle required is not available from a mainstream manufacturer.

#### Contractor Fleet

- Require new contractors over a certain size to deliver services with the highest standards of vehicle available. This is expected to amount to zero emissions by 2030 at the very latest.
- Require all contractors to demonstrate efforts to reduce their fuel use and emissions where practical. This might include latest specification vehicles, alternatively fuelled vehicles (e.g. electric, biodiesel), particulate traps, driver training, green travel initiatives and Vehicle Telemetry – such as vehicle tracking, speed limiters and sat nav systems to assist drivers to find the most direct route.
- Request annual fuel consumption data from our largest suppliers and where practical will work with them to set annual reduction targets to encourage on-going reductions in transport emissions.

## 18. Wood and Timber

Problem: The Council purchases wood and timber for construction, fencing and furniture. Worldwide, our demands for wood and paper products are insatiable. This has led to a multi-million-pound industry in illegal and irresponsible logging. By continuing to buy unsustainable wood, we unwittingly destroy natural landscapes, contribute to flooding and soil erosion, human rights abuses, threatening the lifestyle or lives of indigenous peoples and destroy the habitats of countless rare and threatened creatures. Illegal logging also pushes down the market price of timber.

The following commitments apply to timber, flooring and furniture.

#### The Council will:

- Abide by the UK Government's Timber Procurement Policy which requires that all timber and timber products procured, be legal and sustainable, or FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) licensed. FLEGT is an EU initiative to support countries to address illegal logging.
- Purchase all timber and timber sheet materials from a sustainable source. Materials which cannot demonstrate this must not be used. The Council gives preference for timber and timber panel products which are from a sustainable source carrying the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification), or equivalent trademark which can certify the product is sustainable and legal. Flexibility on species type will increase the ability to meet this preference.
- All officers with responsibility for specifying large quantities of timber will be required to inform contractors/suppliers of this policy and to devise a suitable method of monitoring timber purchases as part of that contract or supply. Contractors should maintain records of all timber and wood derived products used to demonstrate that they comply with policy requirements. Timber delivery notes and invoices from suppliers should clearly state the chain of custody certificate number and certified scheme e.g. FSC. These should be monitored to ensure sustainability and legality of

supply. Spot checks are acceptable. Environment Statements from suppliers alone may not be used to demonstrate material sustainability.

- Source European timber where possible.
- Not purchase wood or wood products containing the wood preservatives pentachlorophenol (PCP), lindane or tributyltin oxide (TBTO).
- Include the following text to relevant tender documentation:

Text for Tender Documentation: St Albans City and District Council is committed to purchasing timber from accredited sustainable sources and is seeking contractors who will assist us to achieve this aim. In your tender you should indicate how you will secure sustainable and legal timber and timber products and provide evidence of this via provision of chain of custody certificate number, invoices and delivery notes. Information and evidence on timber procurement can be requested at any time by the Council. The contractor shall maintain records of all timber and wood derived products used.

**Cost implication:** *Depending on availability, FSC-certified timber is likely to be approximately the same price as non-FSC timber (FSC 2005). Where companies are not registered for ISO 9001 or 14,001, achieving a chain of custody may increase costs as the administrative systems required are unlikely to be in place.*

See also *Paper and Paper Products*

## 19. Waste and Recycling

Problem: Throwing stuff away wastes not only the raw materials used to make that item but also all the energy and water that was needed to make and transport them. Reducing waste means less environmental impact, less resource and energy use and financial savings.

Waste disposal creates significant environmental impacts. When buried in landfill sites, rotting waste creates the greenhouse gas methane, and liquid waste created can contaminate surface and ground water supplies. Incinerating waste also causes problems, because many materials, such as plastics, produce toxic substances, such as dioxins, when they are burnt. Gases from incineration may pollute the air and contribute to acid rain, while the ash from incinerators may contain heavy metals and other toxins. Since there is no landfill space left in Hertfordshire, all our waste is transported out of the County to be buried and incinerated.

The Council will:

- Endeavor to provide recycling bins across all our offices and buildings, as well as within the District. Recycling facilities in the District Offices are provided for paper, cardboard, cans, plastic bottles and containers, batteries, glass bottles and food waste. We also provide charity collection bins for staff to offer unwanted items for reuse.
- Recycle confidential waste.
- Toner cartridges which are not collected by the current photocopier contract, are stored in the basement for an annual collection. A small amount of ink cartridges can be included to this collection.

- Ensure that Waste Electrical and Electronic equipment (WEEE) are correctly recycled as per the WEEE Regulations. The IT Team will collect laptops, computer equipment and mobile phones and ensure they are correctly recycled.
- Recycle small electricals within our office recycling system.
- Offer useable furniture, IT equipment and stationary, to local organisations before being recycled or disposed of. Local organisations include: JPA Furniture, Emmaus, Parish Councils, voluntary groups via the CVS Mailing list and local schools.

V1. <i>Original Version:</i>	<i>08 September 2009</i>
V2. <i>Update</i>	<i>02 November 2011</i>
V3. <i>Update</i>	11 August 2020
V4. <i>Update</i>	22 December 2022

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