

# PUBLICA

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY POLICY

### Introduction

Publica's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy (also known as our sustainability policy) sets out the ways in which we consider our social, economic and environmental responsibilities and address the consequences of our business activities, aiming for a more sustainable future.

Publica is a council-owned company delivering shared services to four partner councils (Cotswold, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire District Councils and Cheltenham Borough Council). Publica also provides services to a number of clients: Cheltenham Borough Homes; the Cheltenham Trust; and Ubico (an environmental services local authority company).

As a service delivery company and a large employer, Publica can make a positive difference in many areas and our commitments are set out in this policy. These are all underpinned by our Publica values – The Publica Way - which illustrates how we approach all of our work, being Authentic, Modern, Flexible and Thoughtful.

As part of our core work, we will continue to support our partner councils and clients, working to achieve their own sustainability objectives (not detailed in this policy). We will also support our councils' Climate Emergency work embedding emission reduction in everything we do, delivering projects and adapting service delivery and our internal operations, aiming to achieve carbon neutrality for the councils by 2030. Additionally, in procuring and delivering services and providing policy and commissioning advice, we will promote sustainable practices to our partner councils and clients wherever possible.

Implementing our CSR policy will be good for future generations, our business, employees, partner councils, clients, customers and communities, and the planet.

### I. Environment

We are committed to reducing our direct impact on the environment by actively managing our waste, emissions and consumption of natural resources.

We will:

- Invest in digital service transformation to reduce the need for our customers to travel to access our services;
- Consider the environmental consequences of our purchasing and procurement;
- Use video conferencing and smart working (eg mobile technology allowing employees to work from multiple locations) to reduce unnecessary travel; and encourage others to do the same;

- Encourage car sharing and ensure any pool vehicles leased or purchased by Publica are electric or very low emission vehicles;
- Minimise waste, re-use where possible and encourage employees to use the recycling facilities provided at our operational sites;
- Work to reduce and where possible eliminate single use plastics and non-recyclable plastics;
- Aim to reduce our operational use of water;
- Reduce our energy usage in the offices we occupy and utilise green energy where feasible;
- Support our partner councils to invest in energy conservation and renewable energy schemes; and
- Measure and reduce our own carbon footprint year on year, contributing towards carbon neutrality for our partner councils by 2030.

## 2. People

We aim to be an employer of choice, through creating a workplace that encourages diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities for all. We actively encourage professional development and support employee health and wellbeing.

We will:

- Operate an equal opportunities policy for all present and potential future employees;
- Work to reduce any gender inequality in pay;
- Maintain the disability confident employer standard;
- Provide safeguards to ensure all employees are treated with respect and without sexual, physical or mental harassment;
- Raise our employees' awareness of issues relating to the safeguarding of children and adults at risk, and how to report any safeguarding concerns;
- Offer our employees clear and fair terms and conditions of employment;
- Establish and maintain a clear and fair employee remuneration policy and forums for employee consultation, including collective bargaining with our recognised trade unions;
- Provide living wage employment and a total reward package for our employees which includes:
  - Flexible working to support a healthy work/life balance;
  - Parental and maternity/paternity leave that exceeds the statutory requirements;
  - A peer-to-peer recognition scheme for individuals and teams;
  - Opportunities for education and personal development;
  - Pay progression linked to individual and team achievement; and
  - Pension provision and a range of optional health and lifestyle benefits.
- Support the next generation and succession planning through providing opportunities for interns, apprentices and graduates;
- Be transparent and open in our work, publishing key information on our website;
- Provide a clean, healthy and safe working environment;

- Support our employees to maintain (and recover to) good mental and physical health wherever possible; and
- Uphold the Publica values and honesty, partnership and fairness in our relationships with our employees, partner councils and their councillors, clients, customers and other stakeholders.

### **3. Commissioning and Procurement**

We want to ensure that we consider and address the social and environmental impacts of our purchasing, procurement and commissioning.

We will:

- Ensure our contracts (and those we manage for our partner councils and clients) clearly set out the agreed terms, conditions and basis of the relationship;
- Embed within our procurement procedures and evaluation, criteria for sustainability, emission reduction and avoidance of single use plastics;
- Consider the impact on climate change of all our contracts, including those we manage for our partner councils and clients, seeking to change practices and operations to reduce emissions;
- Operate in a way that guards against unfair business practice;
- Abide by all fair labour practices to prevent our activities from directly or indirectly violating human rights in any country (e.g. forced labour, modern slavery);
- Train our procurement team to help prevent modern slavery and raise awareness of modern slavery with all our employees;
- Establish requirements and/or standards for suppliers and contractors to adopt responsible business policies and practices for mutual benefit, including on the safeguarding of children and adults at risk;
- Explore development of sustainable ('green') purchasing guidance that considers life-cycle impacts on the environment and links into our procurement policy;
- Maintain whistleblowing, anti-bribery, anti-fraud and anti-corruption policies and practices; and
- Promote our business conduct policy (which covers ethical standards, gifts and hospitality) throughout our organisation.

### **4. Community**

We want Publica to play a positive role in supporting the local communities in which we work, to strengthen social cohesion and benefit people and the environment.

In addition to the many community focused services we provide for our partner councils, we will:

- Work with our communities to build on what's already there and to make better use of the community assets that already exist - people, services and facilities;

- Encourage and support our employees to help community organisations and join in local community activities through our volunteering policy, which gives all employees two days' paid volunteering leave each year;
- Support local and small businesses, through our prompt payment practice; and
- Support our employees in fundraising for charitable purposes.

## **5. Learning**

We aim to continuously improve our service delivery and the way we operate as a business, learning from our customers and others.

We will:

- Actively invest in learning and development for our employees;
- Be open to suggestions and listen carefully to ideas for service improvement from our customers, partner councils, clients and employees; and
- Aim to raise awareness of environmental best practice in service delivery.

## **Implementing and monitoring this policy**

Our Executive Directors and Group Managers collectively will promote the implementation of this policy. We will report to the Publica Board biennially on our progress.

All Publica employees share responsibility for our performance in implementing this policy.

We expect every decision maker to integrate sustainability considerations into strategic and day-to-day decision making processes.