

Paper C4

URC Bookshop Procurement Policy

Communications Committee

Agreed by Communications Committee, February 2023

Procurement is the purchase of works, goods and services according to a process that is open and transparent.

Objectives of this procurement policy

The key elements of the Procurement Policy are:

- To maintain the highest ethical standards in procurement matters, for example, to minimise the risk of fraud.
- To ensure the correct goods or services are purchased, in terms of quality and specification.
- To achieve the best value for money.
- To keep paperwork to minimum.
- To act fairly towards suppliers.
- To promote equality, diversity and sustainability throughout procurement matters, in line with the URC's values and policies (eg eco policy).
- To return a profit for the URC from the operation.

The URC Bookshop

The bookshop exists to supply church resources, books, goods, gifts and services to the whole URC and beyond, of items published by the URC (eg the Prayer Handbook and the Diary, *That They All May Be One* by Steve Tomkins, *50 Hymns for 50 Years* by the Revd Anne Sardeson) and items by ministers, members and friends of the URC (eg *Praying the Way* by the Revd Terry Hinks, *Holy Habits: Following Jesus* by Andrew Roberts).

The bookshop ensures orders are despatched quickly through a despatch clerk who works two days a week, and more on an overtime basis during the busier months leading up to Christmas.

The orders are mostly received online via the bookshop website, www.urchop.co.uk, and by phone, and are given to the clerk for despatch. The bookshop uses Royal Mail 48 and DPD to send packages, in accounts separate to that of the London URC office.

There was an additional temporary position costing the bookshop £30k pa, but when that person left in February 2020, the position was not replaced. Phone orders (average 2 a day) are dealt with by the Head of Communications.

The Head of Communications (HOC) leads the bookshop operation with purchases from suppliers offering the best deals, that do not exceed the budget of the team and that of customers (eg very high value items), and to ensure purchased goods and services conform with the quantity and quality specified in the order.

Values

The bookshop wants suppliers to embrace, share and support the values of the URC. The URC is committed to taking positive action on climate change and to work with suppliers who share our commitment to sustainability. For example, asking for plastic not to be used for individual items, and for the use of cardboard packaging instead.

For all purchase transactions, the following thresholds are applicable. When calculating the contract value, for a one-off purchase, the total cost of the goods or services will provide the contract value, which includes VAT:

- Up to £9,999: the HOC has discretion but rules regarding preferred suppliers, transparency and value for money must always be met.
- £10,000 - £24,999: the budget holder must obtain three written quotations.
- Above £25,000 there must be a formal tender process.

A standard URC agreement must be used and signed when engaging a new contractor for a service (usually done by the HOC with the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Human Resources (HR)).

A URC purchase order must be completed and sent to a supplier to confirm an order for goods or services.

Key principles

To maintain the highest ethical standards

The URC values its reputation for ethical behaviour, financial integrity and reliability and has a zero-tolerance policy towards bribery.

Staff must not accept any gift, reward or hospitality from any organisation or individual with whom you have contact in the course of your work as an inducement either for doing something or not doing something in your official capacity.

In the event of a conflict of interest, which occurs if an employee has an interest in an organisation or company providing goods or services to the URC, that interest must be declared in writing to the COO or CFO at the earliest possible opportunity.

To achieve value for money

There are two main aspects that impact on value for money in terms of purchasing goods and/or services:

- Quality and quantity – product specification.
- Right time, right place, right price – source of supply.

This usually includes:

- Purpose of goods or services (are they suitable for the URC audience?)
- Necessary characteristics (size, finish, minimum quantity etc)
- Life span (Bookshop items have long-term objectives, for example, to ensure a better item purchase rate, multiple units of URC clothing – polo shirts and hoodies – are purchased for sale over a three-year period)
- Reliability (is the supplier brand new or well established?)
- Maintenance arrangements (if needed).

To act fairly towards suppliers

The bookshop aims to pay suppliers for goods and/or services within 30 days of receiving an invoice. To achieve this aim, staff and suppliers are required to ensure related paperwork is processed promptly.

To promote equality, diversity and sustainability

The URC has a statutory duty to outlaw disability, race and gender discrimination in all of its functions. We will ensure that the purchase of goods, services and facilities is undertaken in line with our equality and diversity commitments.

We will not use suppliers who do not share our values on equality of opportunity and diversity. In all cases, the general equality duty requires staff and its contractors to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

To ensure good use of space

The bookshop has limited space in the Lower Ground Floor at 86 Tavistock Place, and in non-jubilee years, the only time that space in the meeting rooms is needed is when the Prayer Handbook is delivered. It's cheaper to take all copies at once rather than pay £50 for each partial delivery.

Printers now offer good prices for smaller runs, and so we can easily print 300 copies of *That They All May Be One* by Steve Tomkins and reorder another 300, while retaining a competitive and affordable price. Digital printing also helps with this when needed.

Governance, audit and finance structure

The bookshop is governed by the Communications Committee which is responsible for ensuring the proper conduct of its affairs, including conformance to standards of good governance and accountability with regard to procurement.

The bookshop accounts, along with all those of the URC, are audited each year and are available for scrutiny by Companies House and The Charity Commission.

Since 2021 the bookshop's finances use a cash sales basis, because of the changing timings of its annual publications. In previous years, money was transferred from one year to another (deferred payment) because some publications were purchased in one financial year but sold in the next. This is no longer the case and so the bookshop finances have been changed by the CFO and Finance Committee to a cash sales basis.

Frequently asked questions

Who has purchasing authority?

The Head of Communications (HOC), Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Chief Finance Officer (CFO) own the budget on purchases and services. This can be by work credit card purchases, supplier invoices or personal expenses.

What items can the HOC purchase?

No specific exceptions, but purchases should be in line with URC values and objectives.

Who can suggest items for the bookshop?

Anyone with a connection to the URC. The HOC may ask for a business case.

Who has the authority to award contracts?

HOC in conjunction with COO and HR.

What, if any, spending limitations are there?

The HOC along with the CFO review the budget and turnover annually.

What evaluation criteria should be used to choose potential suppliers?

That they are an established supplier, unlikely to go bust (however, Traidcraft recently went into administration), and are providing goods or services that meet a high ethical standard.

What is the company position on conflict of interest?

Any conflict must be notified to the COO and CFO.

What is the company position on accepting gifts to staff?

Must be declared to the register managed by the Compliance Officer.

What is the procedure for addressing legal questions?

Consult with COO and Legal Advisor if needed.