



Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment

Room 424
Parliament Buildings

Tel: +44 (0) 28 9052 21230
Fax: +44 (0) 28 90521355

**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

To: Shane McAteer, Clerk to the Committee for Finance & Personnel

From: Jim McManus, Committee Clerk

Date: 26 February 2009

Subject: Scrutiny of Public Procurement Practice in Northern Ireland

1. On 13th November 2008, the Committee for Enterprise, Trade & Investment received oral briefing from DETI officials in relation to progress on the Department's Draft Social Economy Enterprise Strategy (2008-2011). Issues in the strategy relating to SEEs include:
 - CPD formed a Social Economy Enterprise Working Group which brought together procurement practitioners and SEEs with direct experience of competitive tendering.
 - Procurement Guide for SEEs launched by CPD in February 2005.
 - CPD, in conjunction with DETI held a 'meet the buyer' event for SEEs in September 2007.
2. In order to provide support for business growth (Action 2.1):
 - CPD will have appropriate systems in place to allow access by SMEs and SEEs to opportunities for doing business with CPD. CPD will also encourage other Central Government bodies to use this common platform.
 - DETI and CPD will facilitate the Social Economy Enterprise Procurement Group
3. In order to build the business skills of SMEs (Action 2.2):
 - CPD will deliver basic training in sustainable procurement to procurement practitioners, including the integration of equality and sustainable development into public sector procurement
4. In order to foster a social economy enterprise culture (Action 3.2):
 - DETI and CPD will facilitate and support 'meet the buyer' events across NI to bring public sector procurement practitioners into contact with SMEs and SEEs.

- CPD will monitor and report on the success of SEEs competing for the delivery of public service contracts.
 - CPD will provide information on their website about best practice examples of public sector contracts that have integrated sustainability, including social goals.
 - CPD will promote awareness across Procurement Practitioners about equality and sustainability within public procurement.
 - Departments will facilitate workshops/development of case studies of effective delivery of public services by SEEs e.g. in partnership with DHSSPS/Central Procurement /DETI.
5. On the same date, the Committee also received oral briefing from the Social Economy Network (SEN). Specific recommendations on the Social Economy Enterprise Strategy from the SEN, which relate to public procurement are:
- As the new super councils will have a key role in promoting and supporting enterprise it is imperative that local Councils are brought on board at the outset and are involved/represented on the Social Economy Enterprise Procurement Group throughout the implementation of this strategy. In this way, when responsibility for economic development and enterprise is transferred to Councils, the gains and successes achieved can be consolidated, continued and built on.
 - The Network recommends that a social economy enterprise champion be identified within each government department to promote social economy enterprise as a viable business model and that it is taken account of in planning the delivery of services.
 - SEN proposes adoption of a consistent approach to the measurement of social value which can be embedded in the practice and processes of public procurement.
 - SEN recommends the inclusion of social clauses into public procurement specifications to ensure a more equal playing field.
 - The strategy should explore innovative ways of increasing business opportunities for SEEs through public/social partnerships and private/social partnerships
6. The Committee has agreed that I write to the DETI and to the Social Economy Network to seek their permission to forward their briefing papers to the Committee for Finance & Personnel, to assist in its scrutiny. SEN paper is attached and I will forward the DETI papers when this has been agreed.

Regards,

Jim McManus
 Clerk, Enterprise, Trade & Investment Committee