

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to highlight our responsibility as a business to act ethically and fairly at all times. It has been implemented to ensure that our interactions with the environment, consumers, suppliers, members, local community and employees reflect best practice at all times.

This policy aims to align our business goals with activities which support corporate social responsibility.

CSR is important for many reasons, such as:

- Engaging with internal and external stakeholders, enabling the Chamber to anticipate changes in society and adapt to these opportunities.
- Building employee, customer and community trust, thereby helping to create an environment in which the Chamber can thrive.
- Promoting responsible business behaviours.
- Promoting the Chamber brand.

And as such, forms an integral part of our business objectives.

The policy has been developed through feedback and consultation with our employees.

2.0 SCOPE

This policy is applicable to all staff employed by Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce. However, staff are also encouraged to promote the principles of this policy to people they may have contact with through their business activities. This supports our aim to raise awareness amongst the local business community.

The term “organisation” will be referred to throughout this policy and therefore relates to the company referred to in point 2.0.

3.0 ORGANISATION VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

The organisation commits to and promotes the following values and principles:

- employ honest, fair and ethical practices
- seek to provide an environment that is conducive for staff to develop and learn
- provide and maintain a health and safe working environment
- educate employees in terms of CSR
- implement re-cycling initiatives and always consider the environmental impact on everything we do
- encourage charitable involvement
- develop and maintain links within the community
- commit to work with our members to promote environment care, increase understanding of environmental issues and disseminate good practice
- encourage all staff to use sustainable environmental practices
- discuss and agree CSR actions and initiatives at senior management team level

4.0 OPERATIONAL

Employees

- The HR Staff Handbook ensures that fair people policies are operated throughout the organisation. These are continually reviewed by HR to ensure best practice and adherence to statutory obligations (which we strive to ensure are constantly exceeded)
- We operate an environment where training and development needs for all staff are continually discussed and identified, both formally and informally.
- We will continue to work towards and maintain our IIP accreditation
- We operate a comprehensive health and safety policy and risk assessment program to ensure the work environment is safe and without risk to health
- We regularly request feedback via staff surveys on a variety of topics to ensure involvement and participation in current and new activities
- We operate an “open door” policy where members of staff are actively encouraged to discuss issues and ideas with managers at any time
- We provide regular health and wellbeing information to our employees in the form of a regular newsletters and notice boards, through the Worcestershire Works Well initiative.

Community

- We regularly support local education initiatives through work experience placements, participation by staff in pupil development days and are recognised as a participant in the Education Business Partnership.
- Our chosen Childcare voucher provider donates 10% of its profit to worthwhile causes
- We have a formal program of charitable activities and events in place (see section 6.0)
- We support community development through public funded contracts
- We use our bi-monthly publication (Business Direction) to promote and publicise our own CSR activities and those of our members
- We allow every employee 1 day’s paid leave per year for personal charitable involvement such as volunteer work in a school, hospital, day centre (see section 6.0)

- We actively encourage all suppliers to be local and members, which in turn will support the local business community.

Environment

- We operate a cost control policy which includes the reduction in use of paper, utilities and travel pollution.
- We provide mixed re-cycling bins for most types of business waste.
- We will investigate and where appropriate, implement environmentally friendly national schemes (such as the CycleScheme program) where we are able to encourage environmentally friendly practices and a healthy workforce.

6.0 PARTICIPATION IN CHARITABLE EVENTS

6.1 Our commitment

Throughout the financial year we receive a high number of requests to take part in CSR activities (for example, charity events) and as such are unable to commit to all of them. This could be either due to financial reasons (e.g. cost of entry fees) or the amount of time the business may lose if a number of employees are unavailable at any one time (if the event is taking place during working hours).

Therefore, it is important that we plan and approve these activities to ensure that we continue to support charitable events as much as we can, whilst also ensuring that business continuity is maintained.

6.2 Operational Process

The following process should therefore be followed to ensure fair handling of these requests.

- All requests received for CSR activity must be sent to the HR Assistant and subsequently agreed by the CEO prior to confirmation of Chamber support. Individuals should not send out requests to ask for volunteers to take part in an event until CEO approval has been obtained. Once CEO approval has been given for the Chamber to support a particular charity, then normal line management approval for time off for individuals will apply to those people who volunteer to take part, if the activity is in working hours.

For activities outside working hours, then line manager approval is not given but as participation in the event is considered voluntary, then TOIL will not apply.

- Those requests which come from Patron or Strategic members will take priority over those from non-members. In exceptional circumstances (or at the discretion of the CEO) a request from a non-member may be accommodated. However, we will not usually accommodate requests from non-members as this may be seen to de-value the membership of those charities who do pay for Chamber membership.
- Requests from charities and sectors that have not been represented in CSR activity will take precedent over those that already have been supported within the financial year, with the exception of the Chamber's charities of choice.
- When approving requests for charitable involvement, we will aim to cover a broad range of charitable causes (i.e. mental health, children, environmental, hospices, etc)

- Individuals should not invite colleagues to take part in a charitable event associated with the Chamber or an event taking place during working hours without prior approval from the CEO/HR and individuals must also obtain line management approval in order to protect business continuity.

6.3 Time off

All employees are allowed 1 paid day per year (7.4 hours) to take part in a charitable activity of their choice. This includes any personal charitable involvement they wish to make if this time falls within their normal working hours. Time may be taken as 1 day or broken down into hours over a number of days. For part-time employees the time allowed will be pro-rata'd in line with their contractual working hours.

6.4 Approval Process

An absence request form for CSR activity must be completed, signed by the line manager and returned to HR before the time is actually taken. This is important in order to ensure that there is no risk to continuity of business due to members of the same department being unavailable at any one time. Should a disproportionate amount of volunteers come forward from one particular area of the business, then not all may be given approval to take part. Should this situation arise, then this will be discussed with individuals at the appropriate time

HR will maintain records which will be used to ascertain how many hours the organisation has given in support of charitable events, together with how much money was raised through sponsorship etc where appropriate.

7.0 POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be regularly reviewed by Human Resources and recommendations made to the senior management team. Subsequent amendments as a result of any review will be communicated to staff via email and through staff briefings and a copy of the up-to-date policy will be available for viewing on the public drive.

Employees are encouraged to suggest updates and additions at any time, which will be reviewed by the senior management team and the policy subsequently updated if appropriate.