

## Collective Social Responsibility Policy

### 1. Function

We recognise the importance of the community in which we work and our responsibility to contribute to it in a positive way. In the wider world we understand the importance of managing our business in a sustainable and responsible manner. Our aim is to practice what we preach. We seek to involve ourselves directly in projects and initiatives which use to best effect the skills and energies that we have. We attempt to limit our impact on the environment by understanding the pressures we all face and implementing considered and considerate policies. We believe that we can make a difference for the better and we are committed to doing so in the following ways:

- Conducting ourselves responsibly and in an ethical manner
- Creating a positive and supportive working environment
- Supporting local communities and charitable organisations
- Acting fairly in our dealings with clients, suppliers and other third parties
- Minimising the impact on our environment

### 2. Communication

We communicate this policy to our staff, clients and other stakeholders by means of our website, publicity materials, and internal memos. We provide our staff with details of our CSR strategy and this policy and seek to raise awareness of any negative impacts of our business and methods to reduce them.

### 3. Responsibility and review

The firm's CSR Committee is responsible to the Management Board for the oversight of the firm's collective responsibility objectives as outlined above and for implementing this policy. Members of the CSR Committee have key roles in ensuring the systems and controls we have in place are effective and that this policy remains up to date and relevant to the needs of the firm and its clients.

Members of the CSR Committee are as follows:

- Grace Kerr, Lead and representing our Chelmsford office
- Sara Sayer and Gemma Goddard, representing our Cambridge office
- Susan Young and Hannah Harbottle representing our Chelmsford office
- Talia Jacobs and Grace Shek representing our London office

- Shaun Savory representing our Ipswich office and the HR function
- Shaun Folan and Barbara Thomas representing our Ipswich office and the Operations function
- Laura Shumiloff representing our Ipswich office and our Client Services function
- Philippa Littlechild representing our Ipswich office and our Risk and Compliance function
- Bhargav Trivedi and Emma Rees representing our Norwich office
- Charlotte Wormstone, Georgia Mayes, Charlotte Wilkins and James Dinwiddy representing our Ipswich Office

The Committee meets quarterly and at such other times as the Chair of the Committee may require. The activities, observations and recommendations of the Committee are reported through minutes and an annual report to the Management Board and through a quarterly newsletter to all staff. The Chair of the CSR Committee is appointed by the Senior Partner of Birketts to serve for a term of up to four years.

The Committee's role is to:

- encourage, support and inspire the partners and staff to achieve our CSR objectives;
- investigate any matters within its responsibilities and to make recommendations to the Management Board to improve current practices;
- oversee the creation of appropriate policies and supporting measures;
- monitor the firm's engagement with external stakeholders and other interested parties;
- approve requests to undertake pro bono work falling outside our agreed arrangements with the ProHelp Schemes; and
- appoint the Chairperson for each of our four Birketts Fund Charitable Committees and oversee their activities.

All members of staff have a role to play in achieving our CSR objectives and are encouraged to make further suggestions to members of the CSR Committee in relation to initiatives we could undertake.

We are committed to ensuring our policy remains effective. As part of our ongoing commitment, this policy is reviewed at least annually to verify its effective operation. Records of the reviews are detailed in minutes of the Committee's meetings and any necessary amendments are made to the policy, as appropriate.

## 4. Our CSR principles

### 4.1 Our values

Our values provide the foundation for our CSR principles and set the standards by which we interact with our clients, our colleagues and our community and under which we govern our business. They are:

- Taking pride in all we do – giving our best every day
- Doing the right thing – acting with integrity and professionalism
- Showing we care – understanding and acting on others' needs
- Being enterprising – anticipating opportunities and being confident enough to seize them

Our values are articulated into behaviours through our CLEAR client care programme. Underpinning them is a central sentiment – that we are ONE Birketts – not just a firm, a family. We believe that our family reaches beyond our immediate workplace and out into the communities within which our colleagues live and work.

### 4.2 Our people

We want the Birketts to be an inclusive place to work. We aim to create opportunities and reduce barriers for everyone and are committed to making sure there is no unlawful discrimination all our operations.

We recognise that our staff are our most important resource. We actively seek to offer our staff a positive and healthy working environment and ensure that they have rewarding careers and job satisfaction. We maintain an Employee Handbook, which sets out the rights and expectations of all members of staff.

We are active in supporting our staff to help protect their mental and physical wellbeing, promoting awareness and providing training and access to support where required to create an open and informed culture.

We are fully committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty and accountability. In line with that commitment, in accordance with our Whistleblowing Policy, we actively encourage all staff members who have serious concerns about any real or perceived departure from the high ethical standard that we set to voice those concerns openly. Our Whistleblowing Policy can be found in our Employee Handbook. We also ensure that we comply with all applicable employment law, including pay, in relation to our employees.

We seek to ensure that all staff have access to the training they need both for their own development and to enable them to deliver a high quality service. Our procedures in relation to training and development can be found within our Talent Management Framework and our Learning and Development Policy.

### **4.3 Community involvement**

#### **4.3.1 Community projects**

Our aim is to encourage members of the firm to take an active involvement in projects benefiting the community in which we live and work. We seek suggestions for projects from all quarters and particularly from people within the firm. We will consider any scheme which we believe will give a tangible benefit and which is safe and appropriately structured. Projects are approved by the Chair of our CSR Committee and/or the HR Director.

All members of staff are entitled to take one day a year to undertake a community project. This time will not be required to be taken as holiday. Involvement in these activities will be regarded as a positive factor in performance review and career progression. Members of the firm at all levels play an active role in the running or operation of a large number of local charitable and voluntary organisations. Members of staff are allowed time off work to enable them to carry out work in support of their chosen charities and are encouraged to engage with local communities and groups for mutual benefit.

#### **4.3.2 The policy in practice**

Approval for new community projects should be sought from the Chair of the CSR Committee and/or the HR Director. Where appropriate the following information should be included:

- Host organisation and key contacts
- Proposed activity/involvement
- Who will benefit from the project?
- Location(s)
- Number and name of participants from Birketts LLP
- Any further support requested
- Additional Items of relevance

Applicants should also seek consent from their Team Leader prior to committing time to preapproved projects, giving as much notice as possible of the time to be taken. All time spent on the activity should be recorded against the non-chargeable CSR time code. Out of pocket expenses incurred prior to or during participation (e.g. travel) should not be

claimed against Birketts LLP unless agreed in advance by the Chair of the CSR Committee and/or the HR Director.

#### **4.4 Law in the community**

##### **4.4.1 Pro bono work**

We are members of the Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire branches of the ProHelp group, one of the many schemes created by the Business in the Community organisation. The aim is to provide a broad range of professional services to locally based charities, not for profit groups and the voluntary sector free of charge and the group's members include local firms of solicitors, accountants, surveyors and a host of other professionals.

We also provide encouragement to staff members to participate in local pro-bono initiatives with the object of providing legal assistance and support to small local groups principally concerned with the interests of ethnic minorities and the disadvantaged. Partners and staff enthusiastically give of their time to a wide range of charitable and community organisations as trustees or in other management and advisory roles. In some cases the firm provides its services to such groups at discounted rates, or free of charge, subject to the approval of the CSR Committee as set out in 4.4.2 below.

We do not supply pro bono assistance to individuals, or to organisations whose primary purpose is the promotion of religion, animal welfare, or those that have a political agenda. The activities of the organisation must not exclude any section of society and pro bono help is usually only given where the organisation could not realistically be expected to afford the advice that they require. Requests to undertake pro bono work outside the ProHelp Schemes will be considered by the CSR Committee as outlined below.

##### **4.4.2 The policy in practice**

Pro bono work under the ProHelp Scheme

All requests should be submitted to the appropriate manager of our ProHelp relationships:

- In Suffolk we offer up to 50 hours work – managed by Stuart Raven
- In Norfolk we offer up to 50 hours work – managed by Chris Coupland
- In Cambridgeshire we offer up to 10 hours work – managed by Sara Sayer
- Essex Business in the Community under whose auspices ProHelp operates are still considering a scheme in Essex, but requests should be submitted to Grace Kerr.

Pro bono work outside the ProHelp Scheme

The CSR Committee will also consider requests against the aims of the firm's CSR objectives. Any decision to accept pro bono work will be made in conjunction with the people who would be likely to provide the assistance. To be able to make such a judgement, the person making the request will need to explain the nature of the work, to describe the organisation requiring assistance and how much time would be required and using what types of legal skills. The person making the request will be informed of the outcome of that consideration. Requests that are not in keeping with the principles of our CSR objectives and/or this policy, or those that the firm does not have the sufficient resource to properly fulfil, will not be offered pro bono assistance and an explanation will be given.

All work requests should be managed in the normal way:

- They are subject to conflict checks and any issues highlighted to the firm's Risk & Compliance team.
- A file should be opened as normal.
- An engagement letter should be issued in the normal way recognising the pro bono nature of the costs.
- Time should be recorded using pro bono code 998. If the work required escalates beyond the limit approved by the CSR Committee, team leader advice should be sought as early as possible. At the end of the matter time should be written off.

#### **4.4.3 Concessionary Pricing**

The above policy is completely separate from the firm's policy on concessionary pricing. On occasion, the firm enters in to a commercial arrangement with a client whereby concessions, such as fee rebates based on volumes of work, are agreed. This does not relate to a negotiated fee for a matter but to a larger, broader relationship. Any such arrangements need to be agreed by the Client Relationship Manager along with the Head of Division and CEO. Partners and fee earners may seek to enter into such arrangement on behalf of organisations such as charity clients which under some circumstances might attract pro bono terms. A clear distinction should be drawn between the spirit of pro bono work and concessionary pricing and the latter needs prior approval.

#### **4.5 Charitable giving**

Our charitable giving is focused on providing support to voluntary and community groups in Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex whose primary aim is to improve the quality of people's lives. The Birketts Charitable Fund, first set up in Suffolk 2006, is administered by the Community Foundations in Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex. Donations to the Fund are made annually by the partners of the firm (currently £80,000 per annum) and grants are awarded twice a year by a committee comprising a cross-section of staff and partners of the firm.

Staff committees are currently chaired as follows:

Cambridge: Sara Sayer

Chelmsford: Susan Young

Ipswich: Emma Bysouth

Norwich: Chris Coupland

#### **4.6 Our clients**

We are committed to delivering a high level of service to all our clients. Our internal Good to Great programme drives the right cultural conditions for everyone in the firm to thrive in the workplace and to raise standards in all areas and activities to a level of consistent excellence. We listen to our clients and actively seek their views on how we perform against our values via our Client Listening Programme, using client feedback to advance improvements in the service we provide. Wherever possible, we take steps to promote equal opportunity in relation to access to the legal services that we provide. We take account of the diversity of the communities we serve in order to ensure that, subject to funding constraints, our services are accessible to all clients.

#### **4.7 Suppliers, partners and contractors**

##### **4.7.1 Our relationships**

We endeavour to enter into clear and fair contracts with our suppliers. We commit to the timely settlement of suppliers' invoices. Wherever possible, we aim to support the local economy by contracting with local or regional suppliers and with those who share our standards and values.

We are committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination and to promoting equality and diversity in our professional dealings with suppliers and other third parties. We always work to the highest professional standards and comply with all laws, regulations and rules relevant to our business.

Our anti-slavery policy reflects our commitment to acting ethically and with integrity in all our business relationships and to implementing and enforcing effective systems and controls to ensure slavery and human trafficking is not taking place anywhere in our supply chains.

##### **4.7.2 Supplier Due Diligence**

We have introduced specific measures to ensure that our obligations under the Act are passed through our supply chain. Our procurement process includes vetting every

material new supplier and carrying out a risk analysis based on the nature and value of the product or service. All our material suppliers are expected to comply with all local and national laws and regulations and we may ask for information about:

- Monitoring of tier 1 and 2 supply chains for unfair practices;
- Policies on fair sourcing of goods and services;
- Recruitment and employment practices such as advertising vacancies, work/life balance;
- Training for staff;
- Diversity data;
- Corporate Social Responsibility; and
- Willingness to adhere to our values.

Supplier responses are taken into consideration when short-listing and we make any concerns known to the supplier. Should suppliers fail to live up to our expectations or be unwilling to make any changes we may cease to engage with them.

#### **4.7.3. The policy in practice**

Best practice in contracting with suppliers is encouraged through an internal audit mechanism that requires all support services staff directly involved with procurement and contracts to select potential suppliers, contractors and business partners using a contractor checklist requiring that they:

- are affiliated to a trade association or a professional body;
- hold appropriate public and employer liability insurance;
- can offer references and testimonials;
- are local or regional suppliers and contractors where possible;
- are checked against any infringements or breaches of environmental legislation and convictions or notices served;
- are compliant and checked against previous, current or outstanding notices or breaches of the HSAW act, Laws or ACOP;
- are compliant with Equality and Diversity UK legislation and checked against any complaints upheld, convictions or tribunals.

Contracts, partnerships and associations are regularly checked and measured against the standards outlined above. We have not identified any risk of modern slavery in our suppliers in the last financial year.

#### 4.7.4 Training

Training has been completed by all support services staff directly involved with procurement and contracts. All related policies and procedures are reviewed and where applicable updated on an annual basis.

#### 4.8 The environment

We are committed to behaving responsibly and to minimising our impact on the environment and are members of the Government's Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS). We involve ourselves in environmental, conservation and improvement projects and actively promote environmentally sound procedures and behaviours in our staff, amongst colleagues, clients, business partners and outsourced suppliers. We aim to minimise our impact on the environment by reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and decreasing our carbon emissions and footprint through the following actions:

- Complying with all current environmental legislation in accordance with ISO 14001
- Minimising waste and adopting sensible and sustainable recycling policies in respect of our paper and food consumption, including a less paper office and reduced printing strategy
- Promoting energy efficiency in all of our offices through induction and continued awareness training
- Actively reducing energy consumption by the efficient use of building management systems and control of HVAC systems in all office
- Use energy brokers to find the most sustainable and energy efficient suppliers
- Ensuring all desktop PCs and associated equipment are switched to standby mode
- Promoting environmental awareness through regular staff communications
- Using suppliers that have a recognised environmental policy and in particular only using environmentally friendly recycled paper suppliers
- Recycling all printer cartridges, toners, paper and plastics through, where possible, an ISO 14001 certified and accredited provider
- Providing safe and comfortable working conditions
- Encouraging staff to car share, travel as a group, or walk or cycle to work and supporting local businesses to reduce transport and carriage use
- Ensuring that electrical equipment and lights are off when not in use
- Ensuring that heating is turned off or down outside office hours
- In accordance with SECR, set achievable and measurable targets for energy and resources consumption by location and practice
- Continuous measurement and monitoring of our environmental performance

Monitoring of the firm's progress against environmental objectives is undertaken by the firm's Health and Safety group. Meetings are held bi-annually and chaired by the firm's Operations Director.

Date of last review: 10 01 2023

Reviewed by: Grace Kerr, CSR Committee Lead