

West Suffolk Council Procurement Policy

August 2025

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out West Suffolk Council's approach to the process of procuring goods, services and works. It covers the procurement process throughout the full life cycle of the asset or service contract, from the initial definition of the business need through to the end of the useful life of the asset or service contract.
- 1.2 The contract procedure rules for West Suffolk Council are included as part of the constitution set out the minimum requirements for all procurement activity and the methodology by which any procurement is undertaken.
- 1.3 As an 'anchor institution' and significant purchaser, commissioner and buyer, West Suffolk Council (the council) recognises that its procurement processes and spending decisions will have an impact on a range of stakeholders, including local businesses, communities, Council Tax payers and community groups. As such, the council wants to achieve value for money, environmental sustainability, delivery of social value and security against modern slavery within its supply chains.

2. Strategic aims

- 2.1 In conducting its procurement activities, the council will:
 - ensure that procurement activities deliver value for money and achieve savings by reducing the cost of purchasing and the time taken to select suppliers
 - enable local suppliers, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), and voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs) to participate where possible
 - encourage innovative solution by engaging early with the market to consider innovative products and services where possible
 - ensure full consideration of environmental sustainability in the council's contracts and tenders
 - leverage the council's procurement expenditure to maximise social value delivered through contract awards (for example job creation, education)
 - ensure that the council's supply chains are free from modern slavery and human trafficking
 - increase transparency in procurement to improve accessibility for new suppliers and to ensure accountability
 - use the latest technology to enable faster, more efficient, and less bureaucratic procurement - including, but not limited to, the use of appropriate e-procurement tools and available electronic marketplaces
 - use collaborative procurement agreements, where appropriate for the requirement and the market, to ensure value for money.

3. Key procurement considerations

Value for money

- 3.1 The methods used to demonstrate that value for money is delivered through the council's procurement processes are detailed in the contract procedure rules, which make up part of the council constitution.
- 3.2 The processes set out within the contract procedure rules show the requirements for transparency, approach to the market (for example, use of quotations, frameworks, formal tenders) and award criteria.
- 3.3 It is through these rules and requirements that comparison of competing quotes and tenders will prove the attainment of value.
- 3.4 The council will develop appropriate procurement and contract management skills and capacity necessary to deliver value for money.
- 3.5 The council will also ensure that all staff responsible for procurement and contract management are trained and possess the required core competencies. Training will be given to ensure staff are up to date with new developments in procurement.

4. Supporting local suppliers, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs)

- 4.1 To support SMEs and VCSEs, including local suppliers, the council will:
 - actively consider dividing a large contract into smaller lots to make it more accessible to SMEs and VCSEs where possible
 - work to use a mix of the best suppliers to promote a diverse and competitive economy. To help achieve this, the council will support SMEs and, the VCSEs to become part of the supply chain
 - ensure financial evaluation is proportionate to the contract and therefore does not exclude SMEs from participating in procurement opportunities in West Suffolk
 - encourage main contractors to make timely payment to all sub-contractors and will, where appropriate, ensure that this expectation is reflected within any invitation to tender.

5. Encouraging innovation

- 5.1 To encourage innovation, the council will encourage innovative solution by engaging early with the market to consider innovative products and services where possible. The council will also support 'pilot' scheme where goods and services are procured on an experimental basis and considered to be the most appropriate approach for a particular scenario, for below threshold contracts.

6. Consideration of environmental sustainability

- 6.1 In 2019, The council declared a climate emergency, with a biodiversity emergency being declared the following year in 2020. In consequence, the target was set for the council to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030. In May 2025, the net zero target was revised to a new target of 2039. The change to the target was to account for national initiatives and funding.
- 6.2 The council's procurement of goods, services and works need to consider the environmental impact it will have, and evidence provided to show how sustainability principles are being met. This should be in-keeping with the concept of 'sustainable procurement' which is a process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services and works in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis and generates benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society, the economy and the environment.
- 6.3 All purchases should (aim to) contribute to this target and the council's suppliers are expected to support this goal. The council will:
- consider the environmental impact (in terms of both the carbon footprint and the biodiversity impact) of the goods, services and works contracted and understand that procurement decisions can have significant environmental implications both today and into the future.
 - This can be considered in terms of managing the possible impacts on carbon emissions, as well as the impact on natural habitats and the pollution of land, air, and water.
 - deliver value for money by realistically assessing the whole life-cycle costs of the council's procurement and not simply considering the initial purchase price.
 - include at least one environmental question within the quality section of tenders, with a minimum weighting of 10 per cent:
 - This question could include, for instance, a focus on how the organisation will incorporate environmental impact into its auditing processes, measure or reduce its carbon footprint, source raw materials in a low carbon and environmentally friendly way or offset carbon emissions.
 - The questions should be relevant to the company – different companies will have different impact on the environment. It is important to identify the issues potentially facing this company and seek to ask questions around how they would lower or off-set this impact.
 - There should also be prioritisation of energy or resource efficiency over offsetting, which should be considered the last option – only if carbon emissions or biodiversity impact cannot be reduced, so must be offset.
 - make sure that the contract is consistent with the aim of net zero carbon emissions by 2039

- ensure that suppliers know that the council has declared a climate emergency and a biodiversity emergency, with the aim of being net carbon zero by 2039
- ensure that the contract management targets include the environmental impacts of the contract and how negative impacts will be minimised and monitored.

7. Social value

7.1 The council will seek to maximise the social value achieved through any procurement process. This could include, but is not limited to:

- provision of training, apprenticeship, or educational opportunities
- inclusion and consideration of the local voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector needs
- provision of programmes that support local mental health and well-being
- supporting digital inclusion for local communities.

8. Modern slavery and human-trafficking

8.1 The Government Procurement Policy Note 05/19: Tackling Modern Slavery in Government Supply Chains sets out the requirements for all government bodies to follow:

- The council's modern slavery and human trafficking statement lays out the council's approach to understanding potential modern slavery risks and steps to ensure that none exists in its own activities and supply chains.
- Within the procurement process, the council will ask for consideration by staff and self-certification from suppliers in all quotations. For businesses larger than £36 million turnover, evidence of their own modern slavery and human trafficking policy must be supplied.

9. Increasing transparency in procurement

9.1 The council will ensure transparency in every stage of procurement by:

- publishing contracts in line with transparency act requirements
- publishing tender opportunities via Find a Tender service and Suffolk Sourcing
- publishing notices as per the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023.

10. Use of the latest technology

10.1 The council explore use of technology in connection to e-tendering, e-contract management, spend analysis and other related areas to gain efficiency and process improvement.

11. Use of collaborative procurement agreements

- 11.1 The council will encourage use of collaborative procurement agreements, including use of frameworks, dynamic markets from other contracting authorities and professional buying organisations.

12. Equality and diversity

- 12.1 The council will:

- ensure all applicable procurement opportunities are advertised to alert as wide a range of businesses as possible
- conduct its procurement operations in a transparent and fair manner
- comply with relevant equality and diversity legislation and expect the same of its suppliers
- treat people fairly and not discriminate against any individual or group and actively promote equality
- abide by the councils' statutory equality duties under the Equality Act 2010 and ensure compliance.

13. Health and safety

- 13.1 The council's health and safety at work policy recognises and accepts that the council has a responsibility as employers for providing a safe and healthy workplace and working environments for all employees. West Suffolk will outline key health and safety issues within supplier contracts.

14. Adult and child safeguarding

- 14.1 The council provides a range of services and facilities to the community. The nature of the provision means, inevitably, employees (permanent, temporary or contracted), volunteers and councillors, as well as contractors will come into contact with vulnerable people and their families in a variety of settings. West Suffolk requires all contractors to understand their responsibility regarding the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable adults and children, as set out in West Suffolk's safeguarding policy.

- 14.2 The council will:

- undertake measures to ensure safeguarding practices are implemented when working with community groups and external contractors
- ensure that all contracts will be monitored via the contract management system, with contractors undertaking an annual safeguarding compliance review meeting with an appropriate officer representing the council.

15. Fraud prevention and detection

- 15.1 The council is committed to creating a culture of zero tolerance of, and minimising losses to, fraud, theft and corruption (including bribery) and

maintaining high ethical standards in its administration of public funds. Procedures are in place to ensure that third parties are not able to use the council for the purposes of money laundering, and to enable anyone with serious concerns about any aspect of the council's work to come forward and voice those concerns.

- 15.2 The council requires that councillors, all staff (including those permanently employed and temporary agency staff) and contractors to:
- always act honestly and with integrity and safeguard the council's resources for which they are responsible
 - comply with the spirit, as well as the letter, of the laws, regulations, and codes of practice of all areas in which the councils operate, in respect of the lawful and responsible conduct of procurement activities.
- 15.3 In line with the council's commitment to the highest possible standards of openness, propriety, and integrity, the council encourages anyone with serious concerns about any aspect of the council's work to come forward and voice concerns should they suspect impropriety or malpractice.
- 15.4 The council recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. The council's whistleblowing policy makes clear how any concerns can be raised in confidence without fear of harassment, victimisation, discrimination, or disadvantage.
- 15.5 This policy has been approved by the portfolio holder who will review and update it in response to changes in legislation or guidance, or changes in the risk environment or local circumstances.