

Sevenoaks District Council

Procurement Strategy



Procurement Strategy

This strategy sets out a clear framework for procurement at Sevenoaks District Council. It reflects the Council Vision and Promises and aligns with the financial and contract procedure rules set out in the Council's Constitution.

The Strategy is reviewed annually by the Council's Officer Procurement Group and updated as necessary to reflect developments in best practice procurement. Where updates are required the Procurement Strategy is reported to Members for approval.

We are always interested in ways to improve our approach to the Procurement and welcome your suggestions.

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Publication details

Purpose of the Procurement Strategy

To ensure that the Council adopts appropriate principles in the purchase of goods and services, in accordance with legislation and its own contract and financial procedure rules.

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1. Background & Information

Introduction

Procurement is the process of acquiring goods, works and services from a range of suppliers. The process spans the whole cycle from the identification of needs through to the end of a services contract or the end of the useful life of an asset.

Procurement is broader than just buying or commissioning, it is about securing goods and services that best meet the needs of service users and the local community.

Procurement is a tool that when used effectively helps the Council to achieve its overall objectives. It remains critical to deliver best value in procurement but that does not mean that the key focus should be on price. It is important that procurement decisions are made in line with wider service and Council objectives. For Sevenoaks District Council this means considering environmental, social and community benefits alongside financial cost. Striking this balance is at the heart of best value procurement

Council Vision & Promises

All procurement activity is undertaken to help the Council achieve its vision and promises. The vision of the District Council can be summarised as:

“Pride in the District of Sevenoaks by working with the Community as a whole, to sustain and develop a fair, safe and thriving local economy.”

The Council’s promises are to:

- Provide value for money;
- Work in partnership to keep the District of Sevenoaks safe;

- Provide the high quality services residents want;
- Protect the Green Belt; and
- Support and grow the local economy.

The principal aim of this Procurement Strategy is to set a clear framework for best value procurement that enables the Council to achieve these promises and deliver its vision for the District.

Procurement at Sevenoaks District Council

Procurement is a key function that is embedded across all Council services. The Council has an established Officer Procurement Group with the primary objective to embed best practice procurement across the Council and oversee and champion improvement in procurement practices across the Council. Each Officer on the Procurement Group acts as a ‘Procurement Champion’ within their service area to ensure a best practice approach is adopted whenever a procurement exercise is undertaken. ‘Procurement Champions’ are supported by independent advice from the Council’s Legal Service.

This approach ensures the Council has a pool of procurement experience to draw on to deliver its aim of embedding best practice procurement across the Council.

The production of annual Procurement Plans is a key tool for services. They set out what needs to be procured each year, at what point in time and by which procurement method, i.e. quote, tender or EU procurement. The Procurement Plans form the basis for all procurement activity at Sevenoaks District Council.

2. Procurement Principles

Best Value

The Council seeks to deliver the best value for money in the procurement of all goods and services. This may not always be the lowest price but the procurement option that delivers the best value for money over the whole life of the product or contract.

An assessment of best value will incorporate a number of the principles set out in this strategy.

Social Value

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires the Council to consider, at pre-procurement stage, how what is to be procured may improve social, environmental and economic well being of the District.

The Council will consider how social value could be improved through its procurement and will consult with the community on the design of procurement specifications to enhance social value where it is necessary to do so.

The Social Value Act is applied only to public service contracts and framework agreements to which Parts A and B of Schedule 3 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 apply and only those within this that are above EU thresholds in value.

Sustainability

Sustainability is an important consideration when making procurement decisions. It ensures that the Council considers the environmental impact of its procurement decisions.

Environmental impact is assessed at the key stages of procurement to ensure that principles of waste reduction,

recycling and use of environmentally acceptable materials are met.

Tools have been developed to assist officers in applying sustainability considerations, primarily through 'Pre-Qualification Questionnaires'.

Equality and Diversity

All procurement procedures comply with the Council's Equalities Statement and the Disability Discrimination Act.

The Council has regard to appropriate workforce strategies through the procurement process and includes an assessment of a potential suppliers approach to equalities and diversity as part of the tender evaluation criteria.

Tools have been developed to ensure officers apply Equalities criteria to procurement decisions including through 'Impact Assessment' templates.

Collaboration and Working in Partnership

The Council is committed to collaborating with other local authorities and organisations in the procurement process whenever it is appropriate. At each point a procurement need arises the Council always considers whether working in partnership or collaborating could deliver better outcomes or value for money.

Supporting Local Business and Small and Medium Enterprises

The Council is committed to supporting local businesses and community organisations, as well as small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to compete for and win contracts, insofar as it is possible within the legal framework.

3. Effective Practice & Decision Making

Effective practice

The Council fulfils its statutory duties meeting both EU Directives and UK statutory requirements, and taking account of case law that emerges. The Council also ensures that it follows the rules set out in its Constitution.

No one individual is permitted to authorise all stages of the procurement process. The authority to release funds from a budget is separated from the authority to certify the purchase, so as to ensure that at least two people are involved in determining that the purchase is legitimate, necessary and that it delivers value for money.

The Council's Officer Procurement Group oversees and champions best practice in procurement and works to ensure effective practice in all procurement. The Group is supported by advice from the Council's Legal Service and periodic Internal Audit reviews provide valuable feedback on the effectiveness of procurement practice.

Ethical behaviour

The highest standards of professional behaviour are expected from all Councillors and Officers in their dealings with partners and suppliers. The Council must always act with integrity and, where possible, with openness in undertaking procurement.

Any conflicts of interest in the procurement process are documented and managed in line with the Council's Constitution.

The Council must always act fairly with suppliers in all matters, including prompt payment in accordance with

agreed terms. There is no favouritism or bias shown towards one supplier over another. Procurement decisions must always be communicated clearly.

Decision Making

Procurement decisions are based on clear and justifiable evidence. They are transparent and have an audit trail which can be scrutinised.

Criteria are established prior to invitations to tender to enable a balanced evaluation to be made which takes into account quality, deliverability and fitness for purpose. Such criteria are shared with potential suppliers.

Procurement decisions are always made on the basis of the whole life evaluation of quotes and tenders.

Continuous Improvement

Procurement opportunities are always seen as an opportunity to improve. This can be improved outcomes for service users or the local community, better performance levels or reduced cost.

Continuous improvement is also applied to the on going training and development of officers involved in the procurement process and the tools the Council uses to assist in procurement activity. This includes the use of annual procurement plans, flow charts of procurement rules, user friendly guides and best practice advice on the Council Intranet and the use of the South East Business (SEB) portal.

Where contracts run for a number of years the contract is sufficiently flexible to provide for continuous improvement through the period of the contract.

3. Effective Practice & Decision Making

(continued)

Risk Management

The Council ensures that any risk to the authority or the community it serves, is properly recognised in all its procurement dealings. Risks are identified, evaluated and managed at every stage of the procurement process in accordance with the Council's risk management strategy and framework.

Safeguarding

The Council's Safeguarding Policy seeks to enhance the quality of life of children and vulnerable adults through consultation with them about the services we provide, identifying and responding to child and adult protection issues, seeking to prevent cases of abuse, promoting good practice and sharing information to assist in the prevention of abuse.

Where it is appropriate in the services being procured the Council is committed to ensuring suppliers have appropriate safeguarding measures in place and are aware of their requirements under the Council's Policy.

Staffing-related issues

Employees affected by any procurement process are consulted and those who may transfer as a consequence of a procurement decision will be protected under the Transfer and Undertaking Protection Regulations (TUPE).

The Council is committed to ensuring that contractors are good employers, and will look to ensure that contractors (and their subcontractors) utilise local labour wherever possible, particularly for apprenticeship schemes and similar.

4. Additional Information

Links to plans and strategies

The Council's Procurement Strategy is aligned to the commitments made in a number of other Council plans and strategies. These include the:

- Council's Constitution;
- Financial Procedure Rules;
- Contract Procedure Rules;
- Financial Strategy;
- Human Resources Strategy;
- Equality Statement;
- Safeguarding Policy;
- IT Strategy; and
- Risk Management Strategy.

Guidance for officers

Further procurement guidance is available on the Council's Intranet. This information includes:

- Procurement Policies;
- 'How to' Procurement Guides; and
- Best practice tools and advice.

Guidance for suppliers

Further procurement guidance is available to all potential suppliers on the Council's website. This information includes:

- Suppliers Guide;
- Financial Thresholds for contracts and tenders;
- Contract Register (through SEB Portal); and
- Current Contract Opportunities (through SEB Portal).

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Further information about Procurement is available on the Council's website at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/procurement

Other formats:

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For a copy, call 01732 227000.

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