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Procurement Strategy 2025



Ashfield

DISTRICT COUNCIL

Contents

Forward	3
Executive Summary	4
Strategic Procurement in Context	6
Sustainable Procurement	7
Economic Regeneration	8
Social Development and Responsibility	8
Environmental Management	9
Equality and Cohesion	10
What is The Public Sector Equality Duty (Psed)?	10
Social Value in Procurement	11
What is Social Value?	11
Definitions of Economic, Social and Environmental Outcomes	11
Principles for Effective Procurement	12
Diagram: Typical Procurement Process	14
Procurement Analysis	15
Value for Money	16
Performance Management In Procurement	18
Partnerships and Collaboration	19
Code of Conduct for Procurement	19
Risks and Maintaining The Strategy	19
Transparency	20

Forward

Ashfield District Council and its service provider, Nottinghamshire County Council, are committed to ensuring that the Council's key procurement objectives are integral in its procurement activity and planning.

The overarching purpose of this strategy is to ensure our procurement activities are undertaken consistently to a high standard, efficiently and economically whilst helping achieve economic, social and environmental benefits for our community. Procurement is not solely about compliance – although this is still an integral part.

Procurement is the whole process of acquisition from third parties and in-house providers and covers goods, services and works. The process covers the point of initial conception and definition of business need, to the effective management of markets, through to the end of the useful life of an asset/the end of a services contract.

All Procurement activity should help to achieve Ashfield's vision of providing good quality, value for money services. We are excited in being able to fully utilise the provisions in the Procurement Act 2023 as the Act provides for simpler procurement processes to support small businesses and innovation. The procurement reforms will deliver better value for money, slash red tape, drive innovation and

make it easier for suppliers of all sizes to do business with the public sector.

Going forward our focus will turn to improving the procurement opportunities to the local market opening opportunities especially through low value procurement to help grow the local market and involving more SMEs in the procurement chain.

We intend to advertise Ashfield frameworks where Small Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) can apply to join which will be used for common and below threshold procurement. This will compliment the local supplier's portal which can be referred to by staff to look for businesses to contact when requiring quotations. The frameworks will remove the barriers that exist when tendering so that the procurement process is made less complex for SMEs.

We continue to operate in a challenging environment, in which savings will always be a factor for consideration, however we have a plan which also focuses on achieving additional outcomes from our procurement activity at no extra cost. By leveraging our procurement expenditure and engaging with suppliers, we can help the council enhance our communities through delivering social value.



Theresa Hodgkinson
Chief Executive Officer
Ashfield District Council



Cllr Jason Zadrozny
Leader of Ashfield
District Council

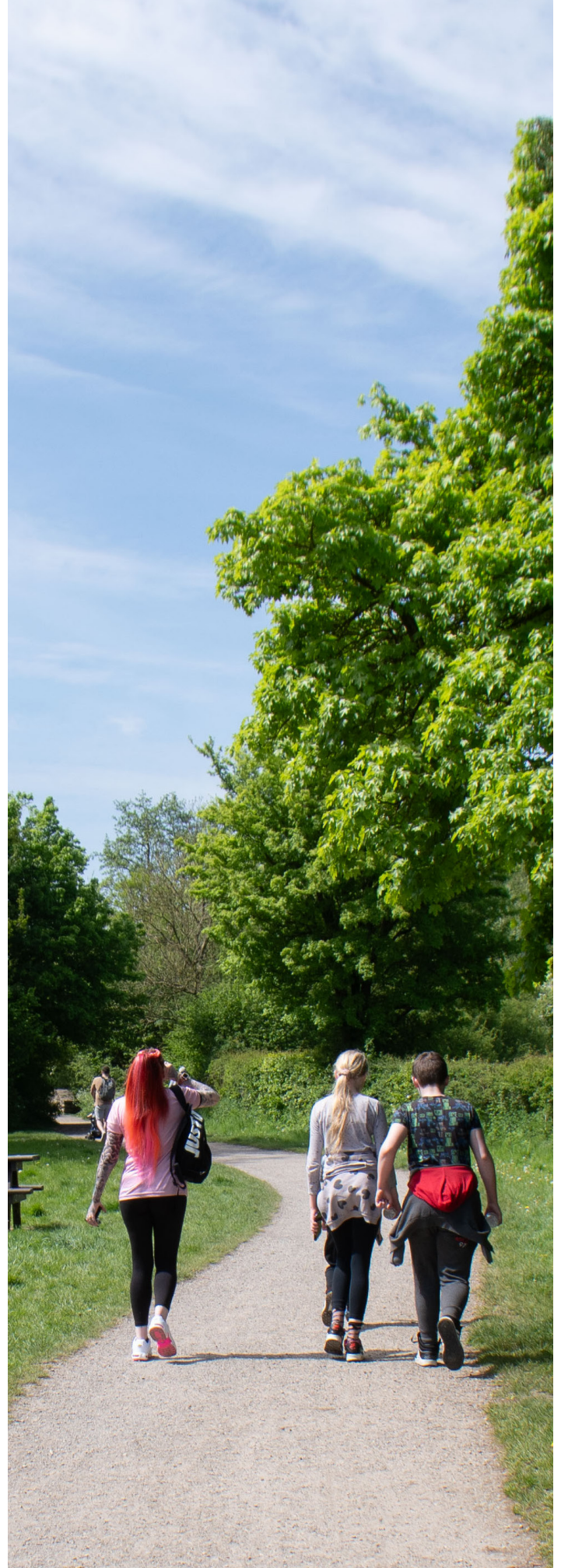
Executive Summary

We are now operating in a post Brexit environment where UK Procurement law has changed. The Act will reform the UK's public procurement regime, making it quicker, simpler, more transparent and better able to meet the UK's needs while remaining compliant with our international obligations. It will introduce a new regime that is based on value for money, competition and objective criteria in decision-making.

This document sets out the Council's strategic approach to procurement. It is not intended to be a procurement instruction manual, however, the principles contained within the Strategy are not optional, and it should be read in conjunction with the Contract Procedure Rules, contained in Part 4 of Ashfield's Constitution, Rules of Procedure. The Local Government Act 1999 places a duty of Best Value on all authorities to secure continuous improvement in the way that functions are carried out, having regard to a combination of efficiency, economy, and effectiveness. The Act provides for the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) where Contracting authorities are required to have regard to the policy objectives contained within the NPPS that is current at the time they are carrying out a procurement. The statement will come into effect on 24 February 2025. It will apply to all contracting authorities who must have regard to this statement as mandated by section 13 of the Procurement Act.

Effective procurement is crucial in securing high quality, best value public services and the Government has highlighted that the development of a clear Procurement Strategy is a key step towards achieving Best Value and delivering demanding efficiency targets. This is also supported through the clear strategic objectives of the new National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) and the MHCLG report on Local Government procurement.

This Procurement Policy and Strategy emphasises the increasing importance of Sustainable Procurement: using procurement to support wider social, economic, and environmental objectives, in ways that offer real long-term benefits. Effective procurement is crucial to achieving continuous improvement and to securing value for money in public services.



The Council is one of the largest purchasers of goods and services in the region and has both legal and moral responsibilities when making procurement decisions. It is important to ensure that procurement decisions are legal, ethical, in accordance with the policies and procedures of each Council, and that consideration is given to the impact on the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of each District. They should also be achieved in a manner that is open, fair, transparent, and auditable.

Best Value and efficiency targets will not be achieved if the authority fails to approach competition positively, taking full account of the opportunities for innovation and genuine partnerships that are available from working with others in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Importantly, this Strategy seeks to balance two priorities:

- Delivering efficiencies and quality;
- Sustainable procurement, by engaging with local and regional suppliers to promote the local economy and taking account of the social and environmental impact of spending decisions.

A mixed economy and sustainable approach to procurement also relies on developing a collaborative approach to procurement with other Councils and organisations to achieve improved economies of scale where appropriate. Furthermore, this Procurement Policy and Strategy sets out the values of the Council in relation to social value, sourcing locally and our position in relation to supporting local businesses.

This Strategy provides a corporate focus for procurement. It embraces each Council's commitment to strategic procurement and sets out the Council's aspirations. It is not a 'user manual', and more detail on procurement processes and issues can be found in the CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES and on the Council's Procurement page on the external website.

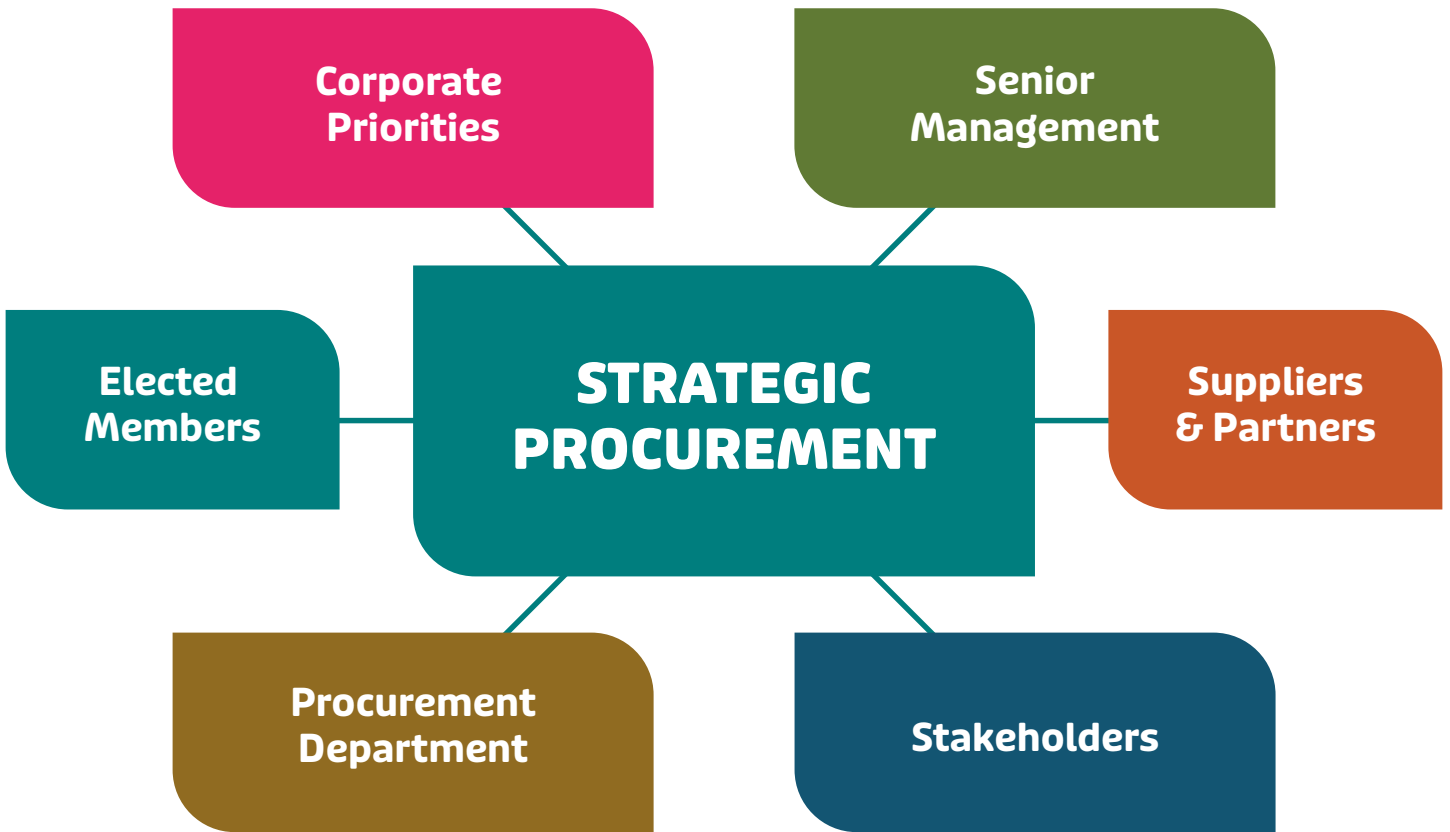
In delivering procurement activities, we will also take into account the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS). The NPPS is provided for at section 13 of the Procurement Act 2023 (Act). Contracting authorities are required to have regard to the policy objectives contained within the NPPS that is current at the time they are carrying out a procurement.



Strategic Procurement in context

Strategic procurement is a series of activities and processes that sits at the heart of the Council, providing the framework by which the Council obtains value for money in all the goods, services and works that it requires.

This can be illustrated by the diagram, which shows the inter-relationship between the role of corporate procurement and the Council as a whole:



Procurement is the process of acquiring the goods, services and works an organisation needs. It spans the whole cycle, comprising three phases:

- i) Identifying needs and deciding what is to be bought and when (procurement planning).
- ii) The compliant process of awarding a contract, including defining the terms on which the goods, services or works are to be provided and selecting the contracting partner that offers the best value;
- iii) Managing the contract to ensure effective performance, Procurement also involves options appraisal and 'make or buy' decisions, which may result in the provision of services in-house where appropriate

Procurement encompasses all activity ranging from the negotiation of corporate contracts for the supply of routine goods and services through to complex partnership arrangements such as joint commissioning with other public sector organisations and construction projects.

Sustainable Procurement

Ashfield District Council and its service provider, Nottinghamshire County Council, are committed to ensuring that services are delivered in a way that protects the quality of the environment and minimises any adverse impact on community well-being.

Both Councils recognise that procurement can be integral in delivering more sustainable outcomes for the district. To achieve this, it is necessary to ensure that environmental and broader sustainability considerations are taken into account throughout the procurement process, where practicable.

“Sustainable Procurement is a process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage, or indeed improves the environment”.

Put simply, sustainable procurement is good procurement. Ashfield District Council and its provider, Nottinghamshire County Council, are working collaboratively to achieve models of sustainable procurement.



Economic Regeneration

Councils are one of the largest spending organisations in any region, and the more money that is spent locally, the greater the positive impact this will have on the local economy, particularly for small and medium sized businesses (SME). Procurement legislation limits Councils' ability to favour local businesses, but there are numerous ways in which it can legitimately support local businesses, including;

- Working pro-actively with partners to support local businesses through media and workshops to help explain how to do business with the Council, and to obtain their feedback in order to improve documentation, policies, procedures and processes;
- Providing information about forthcoming procurement activity through advertising tenders on the East Midland Councils e-Tendering portal: https://www.eastmidstenders.org/procontract/emp/supplier.nsf/frm_home?ReadForm and on Find a Tender Service;
- Running supplier engagement events;
- Packaging contracts in a manner, wherever possible, that does not preclude the following from tendering:
 - Local and regional companies; -
 - Small and medium sized enterprises;
 - Newly formed businesses;
 - The voluntary and community sector;

The challenge for procurement is to balance the following conflicting priorities:

- Obtaining value for money and the required quality;
- Sourcing locally wherever possible within the legislative framework;
- Procuring in a sustainable way with regard to environmental, social, and economic factors; and
- Reducing the number of low value creditors (especially those where annual spend is less than £10,000).
- Reducing the number of invoices processed through the use of a tail spend solution to procure low value, high volume goods.

Social Development and Responsibility

Councils have a role to play in addressing social impact and cohesion across the Region. Social benefits range from the creation of employment and training opportunities to the reduction and where possible elimination of issues of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the supply chain.

The Council will encourage 'supported businesses' i.e., organisations where 50% or more of their workforce are disabled, through its procurement processes by reserving contracts to supported businesses, where appropriate.

Where relevant to the subject matter of the contract, the suppliers/contractor's approach to tackling unemployment and creating training and apprenticeship opportunities should be incorporated into the procurement process. This will also be included in the social value process for all procurement over £50,000.

Environmental Management

The approach to sustainable procurement reflects the corporate approach to sustainability. Specific guidance on sustainability issues in procurement is available on the Nottinghamshire County Council's procurement website. Nottinghamshire County Council has worked with other Councils and agencies to establish and promote recycled content standards for products used in construction, highways maintenance, estates management and all printed matter. In addition to this the Sustainable Procurement Toolkit available from the Local Government Association is also referred to for use and guidance.

The Council are aware that public perception of sustainability issues has grown immensely through focused media attention on climate change, flood defences, waste, and recycling, and have targets to deliver outcomes that support sustainable development. Procurement in the Council plays a key role in contributing to sustainable development, through the buildings, goods, and services they choose to purchase. With this in mind, each Council recognises it has a vital role in furthering sustainable development and is endeavouring to consider the wider issues of sustainable procurement by:

- Reducing CO2 emissions produced through Council operations, recycling and reducing domestic waste;
- Achieving savings for the Council through spend to save and energy efficiency projects that deliver long term value for money for the Council and the public sector as a whole;
- The installation of renewables and the creation of green energy;
- Making more efficient use of resources e.g., the re-use and recycling of materials in capital projects giving rise to reduced energy consumption;
- Leading by example and continuing to demonstrate our commitment to sustainable development;
- Considering the costs and benefits of environmentally preferable goods and services as alternatives;
- Ensuring that where possible, vehicles purchased have low emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG's) and take into consideration the need to reduce emissions and air pollution.

The Council recognises that further work is to be done on sustainable procurement and endeavours to raise awareness. We also include this in the delivery of social value delivered in contracts and will be able to report on environmental outputs delivered through procurement.



Equality and Cohesion

Sustainable procurement also includes the duty to ensure that equality and cohesion is addressed in all procurement activity, irrespective of whether provided from within the Council or indirectly through another organisation. Ashfield is committed to equality and diversity in its service provision and will ensure compliance with all legislation covering anti-discrimination and assess suppliers' and service providers' commitment to these aims and values when procuring goods and services. Ashfield is addressing this through:

- Council adoption of the Modern Slavery Charter;
- Inclusion of directives in Ashfield's Contract Procedure Rules regarding completion by suppliers of a Declaration of professional and business conduct, including Blacklisting;
- Actively seeking commitment from suppliers not to use zero-hour contracts, to recruit local apprentices and local labour and to pay the Living Wage;
- Where appropriate building equality and diversity terms and conditions into standard procurement documents;
- Providing workshops and written guidance for potential and existing bidders that include demonstrating the business case for equality and diversity;
- Providing workshops to assist Partner authority officers in addressing equality and cohesion in procurement activity;
- Monitoring compliance against equality and diversity requirements in contracts;
- Raising awareness and making plans to address the requirements of the Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act (2010) (the Act) sets out anti-discrimination law in the UK. It identifies 'protected characteristics', age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnerships.

When conducting their procurement activities, Central Government departments and their agencies must ensure that they meet their legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and its associated Public Sector Equality Duty in a way that is consistent with the Government's value for money policy and relevant public procurement law.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires complete transparency in the sourcing of goods and services to ensure slavery, human trafficking and forced or compulsory labour does not occur at any point of the supply chain. The Council's Modern Slavery statement can be located on our website;

What is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)?

The PSED is contained within section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. It requires those public bodies that are subject to the duty, to have due regard to the three aims of the duty:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
 - Advanced equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- The PSED should help ensure that public goods and services are acceptable to, and meet the diverse needs of all users to ensure that no one group is disadvantaged in accessing public goods and services

Social Value in Procurement

As revitalisation and growth takes place we will support and encourage local procurement activity, to help small businesses and social enterprises to access larger customers and encourage large organisations in the public and private sectors to develop local supply chains. As well as helping business survival and growth this activity will provide employment opportunities for local people, thus supporting inclusion. We will encourage social value to be incorporated into local procurement activity, with the inclusion of local authority contracts and spend.

Our approach that will be taken to ensure that all resources are used wisely, that we protect and enhance the environment whilst ensuring the efficient use of resources and delivery of value for money.

What is Social Value?

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires us to consider how the services we procure might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the area. It is defined as improving economic, social, and environmental wellbeing from public sector contracts over and above the delivery of the services directly required at no extra cost. Used properly, additional social value can be beneficial to both suppliers and councils and represent a joint effort to exploit maximum value from procurement.

Definitions of Economic, Social and Environmental Outcomes

Economic outcomes: providing contributions to the local economy and economic growth that supports social outcomes. Retaining, re-circulating and leveraging funds in local areas – a wider contribution to skills, tackling unemployment and maintaining employment.

Social outcomes: contributing to a vibrant and healthy community. Community based actions. Equality, diversity, cohesion, and inclusion – local relationships, partnerships, and people.

Environmental outcomes: relate to protecting, promoting, and enhancing the environment. Supporting local activities to improve the environment.

Our Social Value Policy sets out our ambitions as well as outlining our process for including Social Value delivered through procurement.

Most advantageous Tender

The Procurement Act 2023 will require contracting authorities to award public contracts to the bidder who submits the most advantageous tender. Section 19 of the Procurement Act 2023 provides for contracting authorities to award a public contract to the supplier that submits the most advantageous tender in a competitive tendering procedure. The most advantageous tender is described as the one that the contracting authority considers:

- (a) satisfies its requirements; and
- (b) best satisfies the award criteria when assessed by reference to the assessment methodology, and (if there is more than one criterion) their relative importance.

Principles for effective procurement

The following principles will form the basis of all procurement activity to achieve value for money:

Commercial Efficiency - Procurement is central to meeting the significant financial challenges faced by the Council in the short and longer term. The delivery of our strategic priorities depends on the efficient and strategic use of our spending power – enabling reducing budgets to go further. We aim to do this by securing the best value for money, procuring the best possible services on the best terms, and driving efficiencies to deliver cashable and non-cashable benefits. We will support the Council's commercial effectiveness, embedding a commercial focus and driving commercial benefits from all contracts.

Residents at the Heart - Procurement will place residents at the heart of everything we do; supporting the Council's aim of providing 'great services': designed to be value for money, fit together seamlessly and be right for citizens and customers – where, when and how they are needed.

Partnerships and Collaboration - We believe that the key to success is joint planning across council departments and other organisations, including early stakeholder and user engagement to inform a joint procurement approach. Collaborating with partners offers opportunities to secure better value from our resources.

Ethical Standards - Procurement has an important role to play in sourcing in a manner that ensures ethical standards are met, minimises the risk of social exploitation and rewards good employment practices. Our ethical procurement objectives are to ensure the well-being and protection of work forces throughout the supply chain, that people are treated with respect and their rights are protected.

We will employ the highest ethical standards and operate in a fair and transparent way. We aim to minimise the risk of modern slavery and human trafficking in the supply chain by reviewing the market to identify areas of vulnerability and taking mitigating actions. This will include excluding suppliers with convictions for modern slavery, using robust contract clauses and monitoring supplier performance.

Governance, Fairness and Transparency - We will ensure that all our procurement activity is conducted in a fair, open, and transparent way, in compliance with the legal and procedural requirements of UK Procurement Regulations and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. We will preserve the highest standards of honesty, integrity, impartiality, and objectivity and always adhere to the Council's Code of Conduct.

The Council will manage strategic procurement through the Nottinghamshire County Council Procurement Team. It will be a corporate resource that leads on corporate contracts and supporting projects. It will provide support wherever required to departmental purchasing and contracting officers and monitor procurement activity across the Council. The service will comprise a team of skilled and experienced officers, and the activity of the service will be predicated on maximising benefits. It is important that procurement is seen and managed as a component of the commissioning cycle, illustrated in the following diagram:



Strategic Framework and Corporate Priorities:

Procurement activity will operate within a strategic framework consisting of this Procurement Policy and Strategy and the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules. Procurement activity must be carried out in a manner that supports the Council’s strategic Corporate Plan priorities. **Prioritise and Plan:** Strategic procurement activity will be planned over a three-year cycle. It will be undertaken in a performance management environment and will prioritise areas of activity that will generate significant savings or improved quality, and/ or contribute to corporate priorities and service improvements. Localised service procurement activity should also be planned to avoid ‘panic’ buying and ensure that the service optimises its supply of all necessary goods and services. Effective forward planning will allow common areas of spend across the Council to be aggregated in order to obtain economies of scale and secure value for money.

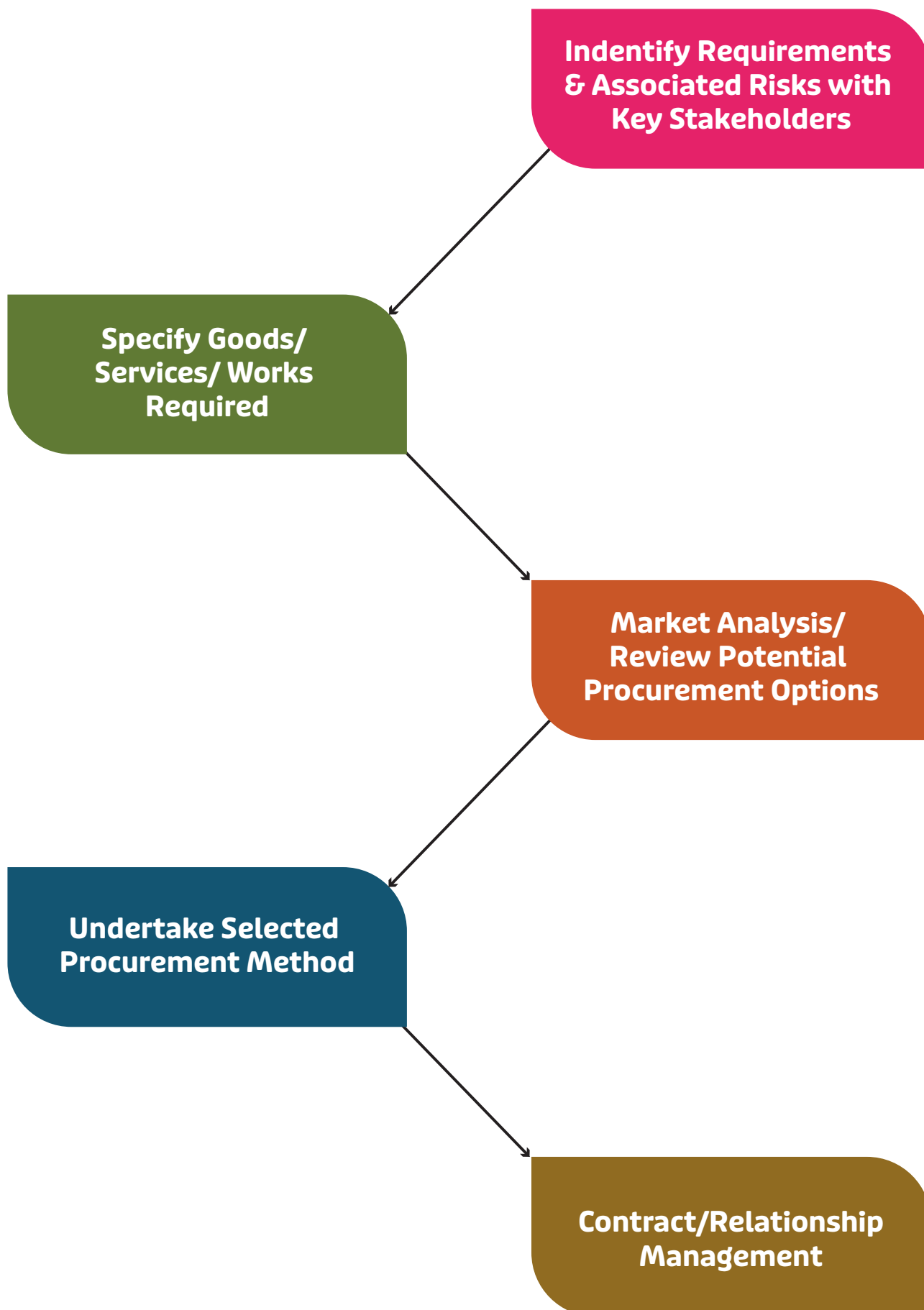
Options Appraisal: Best Value requires the Council to demonstrate economy, efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Procurement decisions need to be taken, such as whether it is necessary to obtain good service or works, and whether they should be obtained internally or externally. Decisions also need to be made as to the most appropriate route to procure goods, services and works to ensure that the Council achieve value for money. Option appraisals will include alternative models of service delivery, including

shared services with other public sector organisations, outsourcing of services and collaborative opportunities.

Procure Solutions: The actual procurement process will depend upon the required outcomes, but a typical process is illustrated in the diagram below. In all cases, the process must comply with the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules and the Council’s Constitution.

Monitor and Review: The monitoring and management of contracts is a critical factor and can make the difference between a successful contract and a failed one. Contractual arrangements should be effectively managed and monitored throughout the contract duration. Where appropriate, contracts should include quality and performance standards that are monitored and reviewed. Contracts will be subject to continual review and supplier/ contractor appraisal exercises. Benchmarking can be undertaken on a planned basis in liaison with both public and private sector organisations to measure the effectiveness of procurement decisions. A good working relationship should be developed with suppliers, and liaison meetings with major suppliers will be held at suitable intervals. Plans should be made well in advance of the expiry of a contract for re-letting it, based on a review of previous and current arrangements and performance.

Typical procurement process



Value for money

The Council is committed to achieving Value for Money to demonstrate economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of service delivery. Procurement decisions such as whether to continue to provide the goods, services or works, and whether to provide them internally or externally (Make or Buy) are central to this requirement. It is essential that the Council not only adopts processes to secure best value but can also evidence the efficiencies obtained to demonstrate delivery of national efficiency targets. The ability to radically re-think and re-shape the way the Council undertakes procurement and secures continuous improvement is key. Achieving procurement efficiency savings requires a combination of:

- Reducing prices;
- Reducing purchasing transaction time for contracts and major projects;
- Eliminating / automating processes;
- Managing risks effectively;
- Improved contract management post award;
- Improving supplier performance.

Our approach for procurement efficiencies is therefore:

- Driven by optimising outputs and results;
- Driving down the cost of goods and services procured while balancing quality and cost;
- Responding promptly and effectively to service and resident requirements;
- Minimising administrative processes and unnecessary bureaucracy;
- Ensuring simple or routine transactions can be carried out in the most efficient manner;
- Considering all options in obtaining the most appropriate solution;
- Valuing innovation and creativity;
- Using competition to obtain best value;
- Proactively supporting the Council 's policies and priorities;
- Complying with legislation;
- Being transparent and accountable;

- Working in collaboration with other public sector organisations and government frameworks (e.g., CCS) in order to achieve value for money and maximise economies of scale for routine supplies.

In order to demonstrate value for money, the following is built into procurement activity:

Performance indicators and targets (based on both quality and cost) are established as part of procurement processes;

- Procedures to manage contractual arrangements are established with performance measured and reported, including benchmarking arrangements;
- Procurement procedures and processes are regularly reviewed;
- The management of risk is an integral part of the procurement process;
- The Council invest in procurement training and systems to support the procurement process.

The Council values in-house service providers that demonstrate quality and value for money. Unless otherwise approved by the relevant Chief Officer, external businesses will not be used where the Council has its own in-house services capable and able to provide the service requirement. Should a decision be taken that an in-house service be exposed to competition, they will undertake this in an open and fair manner, and ensure that:

- Staff and their representatives are fully and properly consulted;
- Appropriate outcomes, performance standards and monitoring processes are developed;
- All information required for a due diligence process is identified and collected;
- Innovation is encouraged;
- Relevant Council policies and priorities are incorporated into any specification;
- Probity, accountability, and competitive neutrality is ensured, and conflict of interest is avoided or managed;

The responsibilities and accountabilities of all parties are explicit.

A key objective of this Procurement Strategy is to provide a means to improve quality and efficiency by harnessing competition. This can be through either:

- Indirect competition e.g., via benchmarking, market testing or external challenge. The Council will assess the competitiveness of different functions by reference to other Councils and organisations. In addition to comparing performance, this provides a vehicle for individual and organisational development, learning from experience and good practice.
- Direct competition i.e., alternative means of procurement. The Best Value review process will enable the Council to consider whether alternative means of procurement or service delivery is appropriate.
- Consultants: The Council will have an ad-hoc requirement to use external consultants and advisors to provide specialist advice and services not available within the Council and to provide support and challenge for major projects. The procurement, utilisation, and management of consultants (and assessment of the resulting required outcomes) should be managed in accordance with the guidance issued in this Policy, the Contract Procedure Rules, and the Constitution.



Performance Management in Procurement

Procurement activity, like all other Council activities, should be undertaken in a performance management environment. Key issues to consider in respect of performance management include:

Efficiency: Ensuring that we are driving down the cost of the goods, services and works we procure without compromising quality. A contracted supplier can often suggest ways for the Council to make savings so Officers should be in constant dialogue with their suppliers to ensure costs are minimised.

Planning: Planning bi-annual procurement activity is essential to enable officers to undertake procurement in a more structured manner, identify options and prepare properly for a timely solution to be put in place.

Specifications: Specifications are to be included and should include measurable outputs or outcomes, performance standards or other appropriate measures by which the contract can be assessed.

Contract Management: We recognise that we need to be more effective in contract and supplier management to ensure we can maximise the opportunities for additional cost savings and non-financial benefits. Contract management is more than ensuring suppliers meet their contractual obligations, it helps to identify and manage risk that will be inherent in the contracts and to drive continuous improvement throughout the life of the contracts. This a major factor in the success or failure of a contract. All contracts should have an associated officer with responsibility for monitoring and managing the contract, including the development of relationship management and the delivery of required outcomes and commercial benefits.

Review: It is important that lessons are learned (what went well, what did not go well), in order to inform future procurement decisions. Problems encountered in a project should be fed into risk analysis models for future projects. Annual reviews of activity, in terms of quality and quantity will be undertaken to ensure a professional, quality service is maintained, and savings delivered are identified.

Training and Development: The key to delivery of effective public sector procurement requires people who are suitably trained and qualified to provide the necessary 'professional' input. This ranges from a formal procurement qualification and wide experience to knowledge of basic procurement techniques. The level of expertise required depends on the frequency and complexity of the procurement activity. Staff will be nominated to undertake learning through the UK Government Commercial College as a minimum.

Project Management: The Corporate Project Management Framework has been developed in alignment with the Council's Performance Framework to ensure that effective programme and project management facilitates the successful delivery of the authority's priorities and outcomes.

Partnerships and Collaboration

The Council acknowledges the importance of partnerships in delivering services. It already benefits from a range of partnerships with private, public, and voluntary organisations.

The process of carrying out fundamental performance reviews will foster an open and constructive dialogue with all those involved or who may have something to contribute, be it from within the Council itself, or through partnership arrangements with the private and/or voluntary sectors. The Council will encourage the development of new methods or approaches to procurement that will deliver services more efficiently, effectively and economically.

Code of Conduct for Procurement

All procurement activity must be undertaken to their highest standards of ethics and probity. The Council insist on ethical standards from the suppliers, and in turn they must exhibit the highest ethical standards themselves. Officers and Members must not only be fair and above board in all business dealings but should also avoid any conduct that is capable of having an adverse interpretation put on it.

All employees must adhere to the Bribery Act 2010, the Officers' Code of Conduct, and the Anti-bribery Policy.

The Procurement Act 2023 sets out requirements in relation to conflicts of interest and measures that must be taken in covered procurement. The Act introduces a requirement for all Contracting Authorities to prepare a conflicts of interest assessment and publicly confirm that has been done. The legislation is clear on what actions need to be taken when managing conflicts of interest. The conflicts of interest's provisions in the Act does not apply to below threshold procurement although the underlying principles are relevant and appropriate. Ashfield District Council will apply the conflicts of interests process to all key procurement at appropriate below threshold levels as well as compliance for covered procurement.

Risks and maintaining the strategy

Risks

Some risks that could prevent the Council from achieving the benefits from effective procurement include:

- Maverick buying;
- Not producing and reviewing relevant spend analysis;
- Using unreliable data as the basis for procurement decisions;
- Lack of support from managers for corporate buying and non-adoption of standard documents and processes;
- Non-compliance with corporate contracts resulting in not achieving potential savings;
- New procurement processes, documents and standards are unworkable and noncompliant;
- Procurements have an adverse effect on local suppliers.

It is anticipated that the actions identified in this Strategy will mitigate against the impacts of these main risks. Specific risks to individual procurements will be identified as part of the procurement project. Procurement risk is included in the Council's Corporate Risk Management register and is regularly managed, updated and reported to senior leadership.

Maintaining the Strategy

The Corporate Procurement Policy and Strategy (2025-2028) will be owned by the Executive Director-Transformation – and updated by the Procurement and Project Officer, Finance as the lead officer and approved by the Strategic Leadership Team.

The Service

Ashfield District Council partners with Nottinghamshire County Council under an SLA arrangement for the provision of procurement services. This was a continuance of arrangements as previously our procurement partner was Nottingham City Council. The agreement with Nottinghamshire County Council runs for three years from 2023 and affords many benefits such as the delivery of aggregation opportunities through effective category management.

Nottinghamshire County Council will:

- Formulate and progress the Procurement Work Plan
- Raise any budget issues, quarterly
- Provide a report on Performance annually to the Council;
- Report quarterly to the Council on progress made in relation to the Procurement Work Plan;
- Prepare and supply to the Council an Annual Report and a separate Performance
- Report for each of the Council s' consideration and such reports shall contain information as agreed by all parties as detailed in the Service Level Agreement.
- The service outlined under this agreement will be provided to management and designated employees.
- The service will be managed and administered from Nottinghamshire County Council's offices at Loxley House, Station St, Nottingham NG2 3NG
- The standard service will be provided from 09.00 am to 17.00 pm Monday to Friday, except for Bank and statutory holidays.
- Employees shall be trained to the highest of standards of customer service;
- Employees are kept fully aware of corporate issues as they impact on the service;
- Employees shall ensure that confidentiality is maintained in all matters relating to customers, partners, and suppliers, and the information they provide and are provided with;
- They will deal with customers, partners, and suppliers promptly and efficiently.
- They will practice a flexible approach to providing advice and assistance throughout the procurement process
- Provide examples of tender specifications where possible;
- Responsible for the management and administration of the procurement process;
- Participate in tender evaluation groups, as set out in the Council 's Contract

- Procedure Rules;
- Provide written feedback to successful and unsuccessful contractors;
- Assist Officers with the feedback regarding disputes and challenges from successful and unsuccessful contractors;
- Standardise documents where possible:
- Assist in managing the information within the Contracts Register and savings record;
- Consider, review, and harmonise contract end dates to facilitate a strategic approach to be taken to procurement;
- Review of spend in Council to address non-compliant areas of spend by formulation contracts;
- Explore existing framework agreements and best routes for procurement activity;
- Provision of quality management information;
- Consideration of local suppliers, where possible through appropriate paragraphs and clauses in the specification and/or contract conditions;
- Consideration of equity of service;
- Review and amend with the consent of all parties the procurement process to improve efficiency.

Transparency

The Local Government Transparency Code 2015 requires local Councils to publish various data sets, some of these refer to procurement. More information specifically related to the code can be found at <https://www.ashfield.gov.uk/your-council/legal-information-public-data/transparency-code/>

In addition to the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 the Procurement Act 2023 mandates the publishing of notices on the Government's Central Digital Platform. The procurement 'notices', cover the entire procurement lifecycle from planning through to contract expiry. We also publish our five-year procurement plan which is reviewed twice a year and contains details of known procurement requirements.