

Cabinet Response to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Board – Review of Council Procurement Policies and Food and Music Festival

Recommendation 1:

To clarify how the monitoring of the new Contract Procedures will be tracked in order to demonstrate how many local businesses have been awarded contracts as well as the overall implementation of the new arrangements (highlighted in paragraph 5.8 of the submitted report).

Response:

One of the performance indicators within the service plan for Commercial Services relates to the percentage of total spend with local suppliers. We will monitor the total spend across the Council and its wholly companies, with a further breakdown to directorate level. Where the Commercial Services Team are supporting a tender process we will capture details of market engagement activities and in respect of quote processes the number of local suppliers invited to quote. Over time it is expected that Commercial Services will not directly support all of the lower value / lower risk procurements, but will capture information on engagement with local suppliers through the requirement to publish all spend over £5,000 on a Contracts Register.

The Procurement Act 2023 introduces the concept of transparency by default. There will be requirement to publish a greater level of information in relation to all stages of the procurement lifecycle on a central digital platform. We will cross check the transparency information and Contracts Register data with spend data to establish how effectively the new arrangements have been implemented and to more easily identify areas of non-compliant spend.

The new transparency arrangements include reporting on contract performance, to facilitate this we will be increasing the level of oversight across the management of all contracts, enabling us to act more quickly in the case of poor performing suppliers and report on contract management activities.

We will be developing a mechanism for gathering client feedback on procurement and contract management activities, including the effectiveness of the contract that has been put in place and the degree to which it meets the identified needs.

Recommendation 2:

To continue to support Community Wealth Building and work with small and medium local businesses to enable them to influence the Contract Procedures and to successfully apply for contracts.

Response:

The work of the Community Wealth Building Procurement Sub-group includes identifying opportunities to engage with local businesses and the voluntary and community sector in order to build market capacity, capability to bid for contracts and raise awareness of procurement pipelines. The Council's Commercial Services Team are active participants on the sub-group, helping to progress and promote increased opportunities for local suppliers, such as involvement in Meet the Buyer Events and provision of advice on the development a Public Sector Supplier Capability Diagnostic Tool, to aid potential suppliers to better understand what bidding for public sector contracts can involve, enabling them to measure their capability against standard public sector suitability requirements. At the upcoming Meet the Buyer Event taking place on 25 June 2024, Commercial Services will be giving a presentation on what the Procurement Act 2023 will mean for suppliers and the differences they will see in the approach to procurement when it comes into force in October of this year. We will be working with the sub-group to engage with suppliers on the development of new tender documentation to aid in reducing barriers to participation for smaller suppliers. Over the next 6 months we will be reviewing our social value policy and will engage the Procurement Sub-group to ensure we are capturing appropriate community wealth building requirements within our social value measures and objectives.