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West Suffolk

working together

West Suffolk Procurement Strategy 2014-2016

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DOCUMENT APPROVED BY SEBC CABINET ON	24.06.2014
DOCUMENT APPROVED BY FHDC CABINET ON	15.07.2014
NEXT REVISION DATE	December, 2016

1. Background and Introduction

This document outlines the approach West Suffolk will take to the process of procuring goods, services and works over the period 2014-16. 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.

The Contract Procedure Rules for each Council set out the minimum requirements for all procurement activity and the methodology by which any procurement is undertaken.

As a significant purchaser, commissioner and buyer, spending over £15 million per year on external contracts, West Suffolk recognises that its procurement processes and spending decisions can have an impact on a range of stakeholders, including local businesses, local communities, council tax payers and community groups. As such, West Suffolk wants to achieve value for money and efficiency through its procurement activities, whilst also supporting the specific aims set out below.

Context

Procurement by the councils will support the delivery of the West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2014-16. Procurement decisions will also be used to ensure West Suffolk maximises the opportunities to behave in a business-like and commercial way.

West Suffolk's procurement activities are governed by a legal framework – principally the EU Public Contract Regulations 2006 and The Public Contracts (Amendment) Regulations 2009, as well as other UK Law and each respective Councils' constitutions.

West Suffolk's procurement activities will support the key themes of National Procurement Strategy for Local Government in England namely making savings, enabling local economies, influencing and shaping markets and improving processes.

At all times during the procurement process the West Suffolk Councils will apply the EU treaty principles namely fair competition, non discrimination, equal treatment, transparency and proportionality.

2. Strategic Aims

In carrying out its procurement activities, West Suffolk will:

- minimise red tape, focusing on getting the right supplier with the best tender in a timely fashion;

- 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, and community-based providers to participate where possible;
- use the latest technology to enable faster, efficient and less bureaucratic procurement, to include, but not limited to, the use of appropriate e-procurement (e-Tendering) tools and available electronic market places;
- increase transparency in procurement to improve accessibility for new suppliers and to ensure accountability;
- achieve value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the council but also to West Suffolk's residents, communities and businesses whilst protecting the natural environment.
- develop efficient supply chains through improving procurement approaches, increasing demand visibility and providing proactive support for suppliers in accessing public sector procurement opportunities.

3. Community Right to Challenge

The Community Right to Challenge was introduced in the Localism Act 2012. The right to challenge allows voluntary and community groups, charities, parish councils, or local authority staff to bid to run a local authority service where they believe they can do so differently and better. This may be a whole service or part of a service.

Organisations wishing to exercise the right to challenge will need to submit a written expression of interest. Each Council will consider and respond to expressions of interest which, if accepted, will trigger a procurement exercise for that service. The challenging body can then participate, alongside others. Please see [How the Community Right to Challenge works](#) page in our website for more details.

4. Key Tools for Effective Procurement

West Suffolk will:

- for any procurement activity consider all the options before initiating a buying exercise; consider options for non-conventional contracts e.g. Payment by Results in appropriate cases
- ensure all procurement activities above an appropriate value are conducted using e-procurement (e-Tendering) systems;

- use electronic communication as much as possible for all procurement activities;
- explore collaborative procurement options including but not limited to, Framework Agreements and/or Dynamic Purchasing Systems from Professional Buying Organisations (PBOs), exploring partnerships, joint working, sharing services, and outsourcing options where appropriate;
- take advantage of Government Procurement Cards to facilitate quicker payment of suppliers;
- put in place the appropriate processes and procedures (to include e-invoicing and e-payment) to ensure that all transactions are made in a timely manner;
- only use Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) exercises when appropriate to ensure that supplier selection is less bureaucratic;
- ensure that supplier selection criteria are proportionate and based purely on the needs of the contract;
- rely more on a simple process of assessing prospective supplier credentials by ensuring greater use of self-declarations, and requiring only the winning bidder to submit proof of their status;
- take advantage of any procurement tool from Central Government or other appropriate body that allows suppliers to submit their credentials only once to which they can refer when bidding for work. This will ensure that West Suffolk does not burden prospective suppliers with repeated demands for information.

5. Supporting Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

To support Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, West Suffolk will:

- actively consider, where appropriate, separating contracts into smaller parts or lots to facilitate SME participation;
- work to use a mix of the best suppliers to promote a diverse and competitive economy. To help achieve this, the Councils will support smaller businesses, the voluntary and charitable sectors as well as community organisations to become part of the supply chain. This will include active engagement to help them access consortium arrangements and supply chains;
- 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.

6. Supporting West Suffolk Businesses & Local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) through Procurement

In addition to support the local economy, West Suffolk will:

- take advantage of a range of communication routes to promote procurement opportunities to local businesses; as well as to local voluntary and community sector (VCS).
- where possible invite local suppliers and local VCS to submit quotations.

7. Leadership and Governance

This Procurement Strategy is a key document for each Council and supports all procurement activity and the Constitutional and Legal requirements of each Council as well as individual policies and strategies.

Each Council will ensure that all officers undertaking any buying activity are aware of this Strategy and will provide the appropriate level of training.

8. Taking a sustainable approach

Good procurement is sustainable procurement and will save costs, reduce resource use and deliver other environmental benefits such as cutting waste to landfill. The Councils wish therefore to meet their procurement needs by taking account of the whole life cost-benefit of the goods and services that are procured. This will help reduce overall costs and generate benefits for the Councils local residents, the local economy, and the wider environment.

West Suffolk will:

- seek innovation from suppliers to help improve efficiency and reduce procurement and operational costs;

- build in the principles of “reduce, re-use, and recycle” and using goods and services that are more energy, water and resource efficient;
- evaluate all our major contracts against sustainability criteria when selecting suppliers and work to target key contracts with higher standards where the risks and opportunities for more sustainable practices exist;
- drive environmental improvement through the supply chain and the wider economic community as potential suppliers;
- seek to use the procurement of Good and Services to improve the economic and social well-being of the community;
- endeavour to share best practice and learn from others to cut cost and become more resource efficient.
- consider how what is procured might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the Councils and how that improvement might be secured, again as long as it was relevant and proportionate – in line with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

9. Equality & Diversity

West Suffolk will:

- Ensure all applicable procurement opportunities are advertised to alert as wider 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 but actively promote equality;
- Abide by the councils’ statutory equality duties under the Equality Act 2010 and ensure compliance.

10. Health and Safety

The West Suffolk Health and Safety at Work Policy recognises and accepts that each Council has a responsibility as employers for providing a safe and healthy work place and working environment for all employees

West Suffolk will outline key health and safety issues within supplier contracts.

11. Staff and Training

West Suffolk will ensure that all staff directly responsible for procurement and contract management are appropriately trained and possess the required core competencies. Training will be given to ensure staff are up to date with new developments in procurement.

12. Fraud Prevention and Detection

West Suffolk 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 West Suffolk for the purposes of money laundering, and also to enable anyone with serious concerns about any aspect of our work to come forward and voice those concerns.

Each Council requires that Councillors, all staff (including those permanently employed and temporary agency staff) and contractors will:

- act honestly and with integrity at all times and safeguard the councils' 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 jurisdictions in which the councils operate, in respect of the lawful and responsible conduct of procurement activities.

In line with our commitment to the highest possible standards of openness, propriety and integrity, we encourage anyone with serious concerns about any aspect of our work to come forward and voice concerns should they suspect impropriety or mal-practice.

West Suffolk recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. The West Suffolk Whistleblowing Policy makes clear how any concerns can be raised in confidence without fear of harassment, victimisation, discrimination or disadvantage