



Procurement Strategy

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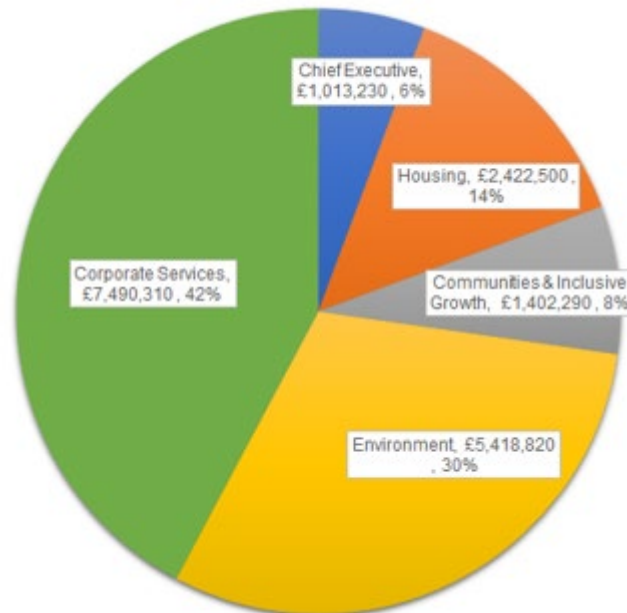
1. Introduction

- 1.1 Welcome to Gravesham Borough Council's Procurement Strategy 2024-2027. The Strategy builds on recent achievements, complements the [Local Government Association National Procurement Strategy](#), and highlights a range of priorities for the Council's procurement approach. It aims to link with the Council's wider objectives, many of which are highlighted within. Naturally, as our landscape alters, the strategy will be updated periodically to reflect these changing times.
- 1.2 Gravesham's Procurement Service forms part of the Council's Corporate Services function; Procurement is about outcomes and at Gravesham Borough Council we do everything we can to promote an enabling procurement environment.
- 1.3 Procurement enables objectives to be drawn into a practical approach. This Strategy has been developed to support all areas of the Council's activity in a joined-up way, bringing added value to Gravesham's residents and communities. It also underpins the Council's Corporate Plan which has been developed to deliver a clear ambition: to create a positive sense of belonging in a community where we are Together - Proud to be Gravesham:
 - **One Borough:** a safe, clean, and attractive living environment, enhanced by a sustainable and increasingly energised local economy.
 - **One Community:** an active, engaged and culturally enriched population, built on the foundations of an affordable and quality local housing offer.
 - **One Council:** a well-run and innovative authority, defined by its skilled and valued workforce, committed to developing its local social impact.
- 1.4 Our procurement approach supports the organisation's core purpose and continual evolution. The procurement function is about far more than just competition and compliance; it is an expansive, value-adding system which supports alignment of purpose and overall public value. When spending public money with third parties, the council is committed to ensuring that the people of Gravesham benefit from a fair deal.
- 1.5 Gravesham Borough Council recognises the importance of the Social Value Act in maximising opportunities to ensure value for money, improve services and choice for customers and to support the local economy. To this end, the council will make it easier for local businesses to work with it to deliver opportunities by winning tenders or by being part of the local supply chain, as well as ensuring that opportunities for apprenticeships and employment are available to Gravesham residents by including these as requirements in contracts.

2. The Gravesham Borough Council context

- 2.1 The Council proudly serves over 106,900 residents across Gravesham and is responsible for a wide array of public services. Gravesham by area is only 20% urban with the majority of residents living in the north of the borough in Gravesend and Northfleet. The borough is also home to several large villages including Shorne, Higham, Cobham and Meopham.
- 2.2 The local and national landscape requires a whole system approach that works innovatively for re-design and improved integration, drives value for money, balances difficult decisions and promotes community outcomes and citizen wellbeing. Continually evolving the service offer in parallel with managing daily operations, is essential in our purpose of helping Gravesham's communities flourish and thrive.

- 2.3 The Council has a General Fund net revenue budget requirement of £14.59m for the year 2024-25. The below chart shows service expenditure levels for the year:



- 2.4 In addition to this, the Council also has General Fund capital programme for 2024-25 valued at £56.5m.
- 2.5 As a provider of social housing, the Council has a HRA revenue budget worth £36.7m and a capital budget valued at £33.1m for 2024-25.
- 2.6 The Council applies many different service delivery models across its operations, using a 'right model for the right service' approach. This includes single/multiple provider frameworks and contracts, use of local, regional and pan-regional frameworks, joint ventures and many partnership operations. [The Council's Corporate Plan covering the 2023-27 period](#). *Together - Proud to be Gravesham.*

We keep up to date with ever-changing practice guidance to identify new opportunities to improve and develop service delivery.

3. Procurement at Gravesham Borough Council

- 3.1 Procurement is a facilitator that brings many diverse considerations together for a common purpose. Strategic procurement is an integral part of the corporate services offer and supports the Council's strategic objectives and operational needs.



- 3.2 Gravesham's procurement approach is informed by many complementary influences such as the Council's strategic plan, service objectives and commissioning strategies, local economy considerations and reinvestment, the wider supply market, the national procurement strategy and legislative framework.
- 3.3 The Council's diverse operations require a breadth of procurement expertise which enables the procurement service to build a wide knowledge base. The team brings a positive service culture, a solutions-based approach, an inclination towards collaborative working and view to the bigger picture.
- [Further information about the Council's procurement operations.](#)
- 3.4 Public sector procurement is highly regulated in order to ensure fair and open competition to benefit both the tax-payer, business and the local community. Procurement rules are enshrined in UK law through the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 which incorporate EU procurement requirements. The new Procurement Act 2023 will apply from October 2024.

For public sector commissioners the procurement agenda is underpinned by a range of considerations, including the general Duty of Best Value.

- 3.5 In delivering a procurement service, public sector commissioners are required to operate a fully transparent process. There are requirements for local authorities to publish opportunities and awards over applicable thresholds via the Governments Contracts Finder website and, in compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, to publish details of any contract or legally enforceable agreement with a value more than £5,000 to relevant council web pages. In addition to complying with government legislation, the council also sets out its own arrangements for managing fair and open procurement activity within [annex 2 of its Constitution](#).
- 3.6 To ensure high quality services, fairness, and to encourage participation from local businesses, the council wants to make it easier for businesses to find tender opportunities and win them. The council will advertise opportunities on the Kent Business Portal and Contracts Finder. Both are free for potential suppliers to register with, send notifications of opportunities by email and are available 24/7. The Kent Business Portal and Contracts Finder provide a cheaper and more efficient way for potential suppliers to access opportunities with the council and ensure a complete and visible audit trail for procurements managed in this way.

4. Transparency

- 4.1 Gravesham Procurement works transparently. We ensure our operations are well structured, logical, and predictable, and that our procurement procedures are transparent, practical and easy to engage with.
- 4.2 To demonstrate compliance in its procurement activity, the council will:
- Publish details of any contract, commissioned activity, purchase order, framework agreement and any other legally enforceable agreement with a value that exceeds £5,000. [View the current list](#).
 - Ensure all opportunities over £50,000 are published via the Kent Business Portal and Contracts Finder. Once such contracts are awarded the council will publish details of who has won the contract, the contract value and, for procurements below the EU thresholds, indicate whether the winning supplier is a small business or voluntary sector organisation.
 - The Council may choose to access approved nationally negotiated contracts, purchasing schemes and Framework Arrangement such as those arranged by the Crown Commercial Services, LHC and SEC frameworks. Where a purchasing scheme is used, this must be in accordance with the [Council's Contract Procedure Rules](#).
 - Actively review purchasing data to ensure that purchases are under contract and where not, seek to confirm and implement the appropriate procurement route.
 - Ensure that the council's Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy and Whistleblowing Policy incorporate the expectations of third parties doing business with the council and are publicly available on the council website.



5. Vision and mission

5.1 Vision statement

We will make a positive difference to build a sustainable future.

5.2 Mission statement

Procurement will take a lifecycle approach, champion innovation, and develop practical, sustainable solutions which promote value for residents.

5.3 Using innovative and practical procurement practice, we will work with stakeholders to support the Council's strategic priorities.

5.4 Strategic procurement themes

In line with organisational objectives and the National Procurement Strategy, strategic procurement themes within the Council interrelate as a balance of considerations which will develop over time. These themes will be promoted across services through the procurement approach and performance will be monitored for continuous improvement.

6. Support organisational objectives

6.1 Procurement is an enabler which supports the Council's objectives.

Our priorities include:

Procurement awareness

Maintain excellent links with the procurement portfolio holder and excellent links with the Council's Leadership teams.

Support future service design

- Early procurement involvement in service planning.
- Promote community and service user input to support effective service design.
- Consult service providers to build supply market skills into service design.
- Support Service Delivery model decision making and strategy into action.

Support daily activities

- Daily operations across the Council's business
- Promote procurement support for public sector partnerships and income generation/cost recovery to support partners as appropriate.

Continuous learning

- Identify continuous learning opportunities and share knowledge widely.
- Undertake support and challenge role to support effective decisions.

Promote equality and diversity objectives

Work with services to ensure equality and diversity considerations are central to the procurement approach, helping build a community where everybody can thrive.

7. Climate change



Gravesham Climate Declaration

[Gravesham's Climate Change Strategy](#) includes actions to review council procurement policies and practice to help mitigate Climate Change, alongside actively assessing major contractors' commitment to achieving net zero by 2050 in the UK and working with these suppliers to improve their performance. This will include measurement and reduction of carbon emissions towards Gravesham's net-zero ambition. It will carefully consider specifications and standards and a total lifecycle approach to consider long term impact.

An increasing number of officers and councillors at the Council are now Certified Carbon Literate, ensuring that the foundation of our organisational approach is built on knowledge and understanding.

Procurement activity will underpin the Council's climate emergency activities by supporting carbon emission data, renewable energy, waste management strategies and climate enhancement initiatives. We will work with services, communities, external partners, and supply markets to show leadership, improve standards, and enable investments which support environmental sustainability priorities and play our part in tackling the global climate emergency.

We will promote local service delivery, reduce road miles, help de-carbonise the supply chain and support opportunities for local supply in our procurement approach.

8. Prioritise local economic development and SMEs

- 8.1 Gravesham's organisational strategy emphasises local economic wellbeing. The Council's Procurement Strategy will reduce barriers to opportunities for local suppliers, (small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and voluntary community and social enterprise (VCSE) when planning the procurement approach and that applying to do business with the Council is as streamlined as possible.
- 8.2 Service providers bring an unrivalled appreciation of local considerations. Their contribution is tireless, and they can direct their operations in line with fast-changing local priorities. We are mutually reliant on their success.
- 8.3 We recognise VCSEs can play a critical part and look to build suitable opportunities into our approach when planning procurements. For further information see our [Social Value Framework](#).

8.4. Gravesham's approach includes

Approaching the competitive process in a practical way, with procedures and templates proportionate to each procurement – with early market engagement, appropriate routes to market and small lots.

Promoting the 'Multiplier effect' of the pound, whereby £1 spent locally is multiplied many times over through the local economy. As organisations gain turnover, they can upscale and invest, gain resilience, and support sustainable services and communities SME/VCSE use of e-procurement systems including Kent Business Portal Social value frame working, informing procurement approach and measure SME/VCSE engagement. Utilising VCSE sector for insights into local community requirements and support service design, with community engagement in service development

Building in Social Value when planning all our procurements: consider breaking down opportunities into smaller lots, ensuring SMEs and VCSEs have good opportunities to bid. Encouraging partnership building between SME/VCSE sector and support smaller service

providers to link with primary contractors to access supply chain opportunities Ensuring fair payment and other positive practices flow through the supply chain. Recognise how local supply chains contribute to the Local Economic Multiplier effect.

9. Social value

- 9.1 Unlocking social value promotes the improvement of economic, social, and environmental wellbeing, and our work must prioritise the things that bring value. Our approach includes:
- Considering opportunities in line with the Social Value Act 2012.
 - As a minimum, all procurements over £100,000 will be required to include social value metrics as a part of the scoring and evaluation process. However, wherever possible to do so, procurements below this value should also seek social value benefits from contracts.
 - Ensuring social value considerations are proportionate with the size, scope, and nature of procurement activity.
 - Working in line with good practice approaches such as the national social value framework. Measuring, reporting, and improving social value in financial and qualitative terms.
 - Ensuring social value is considered upfront in procurement approaches as appropriate (e.g., quality criteria, specifications, design of route to market and contract evolution through its lifecycle).
 - Social value championing ensuring wide engagement and supporting local social value creation.
 - [View our Social Value Policy.](#)

10. Digital transformation

- 10.1 The Council's strategic procurement system is closely aligned with the digital agenda, working across all our markets to seek opportunities through digital access, innovation and facilitate change.
- 10.2 Procurement is a facilitator of change. It links to the Council's digital strategy and ICT roadmap, to identify opportunities for digital change and harness opportunities from specialist and innovative service providers.
- 10.3 We will support digital transformation and modernisation opportunities across the Council, partners, stakeholders, and service users to improve quality outcomes, promote wellbeing and efficiency. We will improve resident experiences, support fitness for the future and transformational change. Digital opportunities through the procurement approach include:
- Supporting service re-design
 - Enabling agile working and flexibility
 - Increasing efficiency through use of better devices, hardware, and software systems
 - Cloud commissioning/remote hosting approach
 - Supporting better IT infrastructure
 - Using data and business intelligence (such as BIM processes and technology for building construction and maintenance work)



- Innovating
- Working to modern e-government standards including cyber security and information governance

11. Contract management and performance regime

- 11.1 Contract management is vital to service performance. It supports overall service quality, value for money, promotes continual innovation, agility, and flexibility, supports early intervention, and encourages collaborative service development.
- 11.2 Contract management focuses service delivery towards quality performance, making efficiencies and achieving cost reductions, increasing social value opportunities, decreasing environmental footprint, mitigating risks, increasing resilience, and harnessing continuous innovation and change.
- 11.3 Our priorities for contract management include:
- Working with strategic suppliers at regional level via supplier relationship management.
 - Collaborative framework management and focus sessions.
 - Using Kent Business Portal and Contract Finder
 - Performance monitoring of suppliers and supply chain. Measures include financial resilience, service quality and continuity, supply chain unlocking partner opportunities, monitoring prompt payment, modern slavery, carbon footprint and road miles, market dominance, early problem resolution. Ensuring all parties are held mutually to account.
 - Sharing supply side intelligence with partners to support joined-up public service.
 - Updating the Leadership Team around performance of cost, time, and quality.
 - Ensuring governance and control over provider performance through good measurement and reporting. Ongoing performance reviews and meetings.
 - Observing visibility of potential risks and ability to mitigate these to avoid underperformance / disaster with early intervention (for example, inclusion of Termination on Insolvency, offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act and Breach of Warranties clauses).
 - Understanding market development opportunities, innovation, and value creation; ensure contract agility and continual development.
 - Post contract review meetings and lessons learned sessions including exit strategy.
 - Maintaining contracts register including risk and opportunities registers.

12. Value for money and benefits realisation

- 12.1 Our services prioritise value for money and our supply competitions include specific criteria which identify the critical success factors for each opportunity. We optimise the performance of our contracts and prioritise value for the residents of Gravesham. We promote service quality and lifecycle value with performance, sustainability, and longevity in mind.
- 12.2 Procurement activity requires the highest standards of probity, transparency, and fair competition. This includes adherence to the strategic procurement good practice and operating procedures.

- 12.3 Further details can be found in the procurement documents we publish for each competitive process and the wider considerations outlined in this strategy.

13. Commercialisation and working efficiently

- 13.1 As government funding changes, we increasingly bring sustainable models which promote service outcomes in the best possible way. This includes the following approaches:
- Developing ideas for further cost reductions and revenue generation opportunities.
 - Maximising commercial attractiveness by aggregating requirements if appropriate.
 - Bringing innovative ideas for service delivery (for example, creation of trading services).
 - Utilising frameworks and dynamic purchasing systems for operational efficiency.
 - Engaging and researching the market for up-to-date intelligence.
 - Developing procurement strategy and documentation for each competition to ensure opportunities are attractive for the market and include innovation and value creation.

14. Risk appetite and risk management

- 14.1 Being responsible for services for which innovation and transformation come as standard demands a balance between the benefits of innovation and the appropriate awareness of risks this can carry.
- 14.2 Procurement and contract risk is an integral part of the Council's [Risk Management Strategy](#). Risks are identified and made transparent, with mitigations considered and implemented within the contract management approach which are contained within the Council's [Corporate Risk Register](#).
- 14.3 This also requires that risks are appropriately apportioned through our contracts and sit with whichever risk owners are best placed to manage them.
- 14.4 This ensures service providers do not take on inappropriate risk and then build risk allocations into their proposals; we can then provide better assurance and reduce costs in the system.

Our approach includes the following:

- Procurement and Services collaboratively designing contract specifications to include risk identification and mitigation – for example supplier resilience and business continuity.
- Identifying risk ownership and mitigation assurance.
- Reporting and monitoring of suppliers' input and responsibilities.
- Developing and applying suitable terms and conditions for contracts.
- An appetite for innovation.
- External environment monitoring and identifying risk implication and mitigation in relation to strategic contracts.

15. Working with partners

- 15.1 We believe partnership should be a principle of how public service is organised. Our procurement philosophy is a 'one team' approach working with networks to ensure resources are applied efficiently, needs are understood, knowledge is shared, and innovative solutions are implemented.



- 15.2 We prioritise early stakeholder involvement and recognise the value in service co-design, consultation and working together. We promote early engagement, collaboration, collective intellect, and partnership, and recognise that competition can in some cases risk driving out co-operation in service design.
- 15.3 We engage with local public partners (examples are Medway Council, Kent County Council, District and Borough councils, the NHS, Kent Police) to uncover benefits which can be derived through collaboration.
- 15.4 We also look to community groups, service providers and reference groups to build in intelligence and local service knowledge into the planned approach.
- 15.5 We see advantages of a collaborative approach including:
- The avoidance of duplication of effort/ resources and working in silos/ the fostering of cooperation across internal departments and with external partners.
 - Strong cross-organisational governance structures.
 - Greater economies of scale and cost savings.

16. Client of choice

- 16.1 It is important our approach enables us to be the client of choice. Service providers have choices around which clients to prioritise, and to secure the best outcomes for the residents of Gravesham we will be a client of choice.
- 16.2 In practice this includes being easy to do business with, practical and consistent in our approach, transparent and diligent, communicating well and seeing things from a supply-side perspective. This requires early planning, market communications, risk allocation, meeting our commitments and holding to our principles.
- 16.3 We plan procurements to accommodate SMEs and VCSEs. Supporting measures include prompt payment, avoiding onerous contract terms, meeting our timescales, good implementation planning and quality relationship management.
- 16.4 Adversarial contractor-provider relations should stay in the past. We believe the best way to achieve great outcomes is working constructively together in a full systems approach. We aspire for Gravesham Borough Council to be a client of choice, and this will help bring about the best outcomes for the residents of Gravesham.

17. Workforce skills development

- 17.1 We rely on the skills of our people and all those we work with for their professionalism, diligence, knowledge, open-mindedness, and leadership.
- 17.2 We are committed to lifelong learning and continual professional development. Our procurement team are professionals who bring unique skillsets, expertise, technical knowledge and offer peer challenge and support.
- 17.3 We aim for high-quality procurement support at all times. This requires continuous development of skills and competencies, diversity, broad exposure to experience and learning, and cross functional working with services and market areas for knowledge development.

- 17.4 This brings formal professional development and links to industry forums, partnerships and learning events.
- 17.5 We invest in skills development to evolve our service, improve resilience and link back to our purpose of supporting Gravesham's communities by providing high quality public service. We value and embrace diversity and equality at the heart of what we do.

This includes:

- Linking with HR strategy to encourage workforce development and diverse experiences.
- identifying leadership development opportunities.
- seeking career development opportunities.
- workforce development strategy.

18. Ease of doing business

- 18.1 Procurement can sometimes feel complex due to many competing priorities. We work hard to stay structured, methodical, and easy to do business with. We take a proportionate approach and work transparently. This requires balancing many alternative perspectives, as we think widely about our procurement approach from a range of alternative perspectives.
- 18.2 The Council has been using e-tendering for many years. This ensures our suppliers have a common system to access opportunities which promotes ease of doing business.

19. Utilise the legal framework to best effect

- 19.1 We apply the legal framework in an enabling manner which allows us to work fairly, transparently, and consistently. Considerations include:
- Common appreciation of legal considerations Council-wide including highly integrated working with Gravesham and Medway's shared Legal Service
 - Staying continuously up to date with the developing public sector legal framework
 - Modern slavery measures and compliance checks – collaboration with the Policy Team
 - Innovation and consistent approach
 - Information governance and GDPR measures and compliance checks – collaboration with the Information Governance Team
 - Assisting internal stakeholders and external partners in procurement compliance
 - Ensuring ethical trading standards are supported by the supply chain
 - Working with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy
 - Counter fraud measures and awareness of procurement fraud risk

20. United against modern slavery

- 20.1 We are united against Modern Slavery, [view our Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement](#).
- 20.2 We aim to positively contribute to both influencing and supporting the National Procurement agenda across the public sector. We aim to do this by providing a strategic voice with links into national policy, best practice and emerging changes to commissioning, procurement, and supplier relationship management. We can all make a difference.