

	<b>Audit and Standards Advisory Committee</b> <b>23 July 2025</b>
	<b>Corporate Director Service Reform and Strategy</b>
	<b>Lead Member – Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power</b>
<b>Procurement Review Update</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>List of Appendices:</b>	Appendix One: Procurement Review Executive Summary
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Rhodri Rowlands Director Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement <a href="mailto:Rhodri.rowlands@brent.gov.uk">Rhodri.rowlands@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Procurement Review and the establishment of a Procurement Improvement Programme to respond to the review and deliver service enhancements.

## 2.0 Recommendations

That Audit and Standards Advisory Committee:

- 2.1 Note the key recommendations of the Procurement Review and the establishment of the Procurement Improvement Programme in response.
- 2.2 Note and agree that a further progress update on delivery of the Procurement Improvement Programme is provided within six months.

## 3.0 Background

- 3.1 Effective strategic procurement plays an important role in delivering against strategic priorities and objectives and responsible procurement in particular, can ensure that the Council delivers added social value and impact through its third party spend with tangible and measurable benefits for Brent.
- 3.2 The Council commissioned a review of Procurement in the context of significant external changes such as the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023, the Council's Embrace Change Portfolio and in response to audit findings, including those set out in Grant Thornton's Audit Finding's Report dated February 2025.
- 3.3 The Procurement Service has set a new vision to 'help achieve council priorities by driving VFM and cost savings, optimising spend and creating a culture of innovation and continuous improvement'. As such, there was also a desire to ensure the service is operating effectively.

#### **4.0 Procurement Review - Scope**

- 4.1 Specialist external expertise was secured to provide independence and ensure industry best practice could inform the review. The review was carried out between January and April 2025 with the aim of drawing out both areas for improvement and to highlight what works well and current strengths.
- 4.2 The review scope covered the following themes:
- Procurement Processes
  - Governance and Approvals processes
  - Contract Management
  - Engagement and Communications
  - Use of data, information and knowledge sources
  - Procurement Strategy and Policies
  - Team, culture and staff development
  - Collaboration with others

#### **5.0 Procurement Review – Key Findings and Recommendations**

- 5.1 The Procurement Review reported in May 2025. Appendix One summarises the key findings and recommendations from the review.
- 5.2 The review made the following key recommendations:
- A culture reset is required to adopt a proactive, "can do" and more commercial approach, build a stronger team ethos and attract the best procurement talent to build enduring relationships. This should be accompanied by a new approach to staff learning and development that nurtures and retains a wider and necessary skill set

- Non-compliant activity within directorates needs to be addressed by providing absolute clarity of expectations, responsibilities and accountabilities between Procurement, directorates and other support services
- Improved relationships between Procurement and service areas can be achieved through more robust governance: at the corporate level through an enhanced Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management Assurance Board; at directorate level through establishing Directorate Procurement Groups and for Category Managers to have an increased focus on business partnering
- The Contract Register is reported to be only approx. 60% complete and should be refreshed so that directorate contract registers are integrated into it. Given the importance of the data held and the vulnerability of using spreadsheets, a more robust approach should be evaluated.
- The Council's Procurement Strategy and Social Value (SV) Policy both expired in 2023. Both should be updated to reflect the current needs of the Borough and the changed world since 2019/20.
- Responsibilities across all social value activities need to be reviewed and clarified to ensure suppliers are held accountable for delivery and SV is designed and delivered in a way that benefits the borough without the supplier incurring costs that are indirectly passed to the council.

## **6.0 Procurement Improvement Programme (PIP)**

- 6.1 A Procurement Improvement Programme has been established to respond to the review. The PIP has several core workstreams covering the following themes with a cross-cutting focus for communication and engagement of all key stakeholders who are impacted:
- Directorate engagement, governance and compliance
  - Contract management
  - Strategy and policy
  - Staff development, culture and capability
  - Procurement operational excellence
- 6.2 The PIP brings together, and acts as the single vehicle through which delivery of all service enhancements and recommendations in the context of Procurement will be delivered.
- 6.3 The PIP was formally endorsed by Corporate Management Team (CMT) in May 2025 and by Policy Coordination Group (PCG) in June 2025.
- 6.4 The PIP workstreams and summary of key activity and outputs that each workstream will deliver is shown below.



6.5 The scale of the PIP and the level of change and transformation it will deliver means improvements will be phased to be delivered over an 18-24 month period. The approximate and indicative timescale is as follows. A detailed project plan to support delivery is in development.

- **Establishment: 0 to 3 months**

- Approval of the recommendations from the peer review and agreement to the improvement plan
- Secure resources: budget to undertake the review and appropriately skilled individuals to lead workstreams, coordinate the programme and provide subject matter expertise.
- Communication and engagement with impacted staff, in particular procurement.
- Prioritise activities and develop delivery plans for each workstream, noting that operationally workstreams may combine to prevent duplication.
- Set up project working group and agree its remit.
- Undertake initial project risk assessment and develop timing plans.
- Delivery of key aspects such as: new governance arrangements, Annual Procurement Plan, culture reset and leadership development.

- **Stabilisation: 2 to 6 months**

- Initiate workstreams
- Commence delivery of recommendations
- Maintain regular communications and engagement
- Update timing plans and risk register

- **Improvement: 4 to 18 months**

- Implement improvements as ready, monitoring and adapting as required.

- Adapt and re-prioritise delivery based on progress and issues.
- Report on progress and realisation of benefits
- Maintain regular communications and engagement
- **Embedding: 6 to 24 months**
  - Improvement, new processes and practices become settled processes, with minor adaptations once tested in use.
  - Report on benefits realisation.
  - Maintain regular communications and engagement
- **Project Closure: months 23-24**
  - Project outcomes, benefits, costs
  - Improvements outstanding to be rolled into business as usual
  - Project learning review
  - Key responsibilities for the future

6.6 The governance arrangements in place to oversee delivery of the PIP include the following:

- The sponsoring Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) officer will be the Director of Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building and Engagement.
- A new Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management Assurance Board (CPCMAB) has been established. The CPCMAB will provide a scrutiny, challenge and assurance role in relation to commissioning, procurement and contract management, including delivery of the PIP. The CPCMAB will operate in 2 parts – an officer only meeting and a member-officer meeting chaired by the Lead Member and Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Community Power
- Regular progress updates through Lead Member Briefings
- A project group and workstream delivery groups reporting to CPCMAB
- Dedicated Project Management capacity has been secured

## 7.0 Summary of progress to date

7.1 Good progress has been made at pace since endorsement of the PIP:

- **Governance:** The new Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management Assurance Board (CPCMAB) has been established and has met twice since May 2025
- **Governance and Engagement:** Project delivery briefs and plans setting out key objectives, outputs and activities have been drafted for each PIP workstream – these are being reviewed with the membership of each workstream and will form the basis of the detailed PIP programme plan
- **Engagement:** Cross-council officer representation for each workstream is mostly complete and follows engagement with all Directorate Leadership Teams to secure cross-council support for the PIP

- **Culture and Capability:** New recruitment strategies have been developed to address long standing capacity challenges in the Procurement Service with prioritised and targeted recruitment campaigns shortly to launch
- **Culture and Capability:** A draft training and development offer for procurement and contract management has been developed
- **Governance and Compliance:** A draft RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) protocol that clarifies roles and responsibilities across the procurement cycle has been developed and is under officer review
- **Strategy and Policy:** Proposals for the review of the Social Value Policy are in place with draft policy in progress.
- **Governance and Compliance:** The Procurement Act 2023 mandates publication of a Pipeline Notice for all procurements over £2 million within 56 days of the start of each financial year. Supported by the PIP, a Procurement Pipeline and Annual Plan has been developed including all known and anticipated procurement activity through to March 2025

## **8.0 Financial Considerations**

- 8.1 The Procurement Improvement Programme supports the Council's delivery of savings and securing best value from third party spend. Resourcing implications will be kept under review.

## **9.0 Legal Considerations**

- 9.1 The Procurement Improvement Programme support's the Council's compliance with the Procurement Act 2023 and Best Value obligations.

## **10.0 Additional Considerations**

- 10.1 There are no additional considerations in relation to the following areas arising from the report:
- a) Equity, Diversity & Inclusion considerations
  - b) Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement
  - c) Climate Change and Environmental considerations
  - d) Human Resources/Property considerations (if appropriate)
  - e) Communication considerations

### **Report sign off:**

**Rhodri Rowlands**

Director Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building and Engagement

