

	Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee 4 November 2025
	Report from the Corporate Director, Service Reform and Strategy
	Lead Member - Cabinet Climate Change and Community Power (Councillor Jake Rubin)
Procurement Improvement Programme and Emerging Procurement Strategy	
Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Not Applicable
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Rhodri Rowlands Director Strategic Commissioning, Capacity Building & Engagement, Service Reform & Strategy Rhodri.Rowlands@brent.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the developments following the Procurement Peer Review and the established Procurement Improvement Programme, emerging Procurement Strategy and opportunities arising from adopting a new definition of “local” suppliers and engagement of Brent businesses.

2. Recommendation(s)

That Committee:

- 2.1 Note the contents of the report and progress on the Procurement Improvement Programme
- 2.2 Consider and comment on the emerging approach for a new Procurement Strategy.
- 2.3 Consider and comment on the options for defining ‘local’

3. Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 3.1 The areas in this report closely align with the Council's commitment to create long lasting positive change to local areas, for the benefit of local communities and align with the Borough Plan 2023 – 2027 priorities of 'Thriving Communities', 'A Healthier Brent' and 'Prosperity and Stability in Brent' in particular such as promoting high quality and secure employment for our residents.
- 3.2 Effective strategic procurement plays an important role in delivering against strategic priorities and objectives. Responsible procurement in particular can ensure that the Council delivers added social value and impact through it's third party spend with tangible and measurable benefits for Brent.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 The areas in this report also particularly align with the Capacity and Capability workstream of our Embrace Change Portfolio, supporting community wealth ambitions to collectively and effectively support residents in their communities by ensuring good value for money for the council and high-quality services for residents.

4.0 Background

Peer review and Procurement Improvement Plan (PIP)

- 4.1 In early 2025, the Council, working with the Local Government Association (LGA), commissioned an independent peer review of Procurement. The review drew out areas of strength and good practice and areas for improvement and development.
- 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
- 4.3 The final review report and recommendations were issued in April 2025 and approved in full by CMT in May 2025. A key recommendation was to establish a Procurement Improvement Programme (PIP) to drive recommendations and changes. The PIP brings together, and acts as the single programme through

which delivery of all service enhancements and recommendations in the context of Procurement are being delivered.

- 4.4 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. Figure 1 below outlines the series of workstreams in the improvement programme.

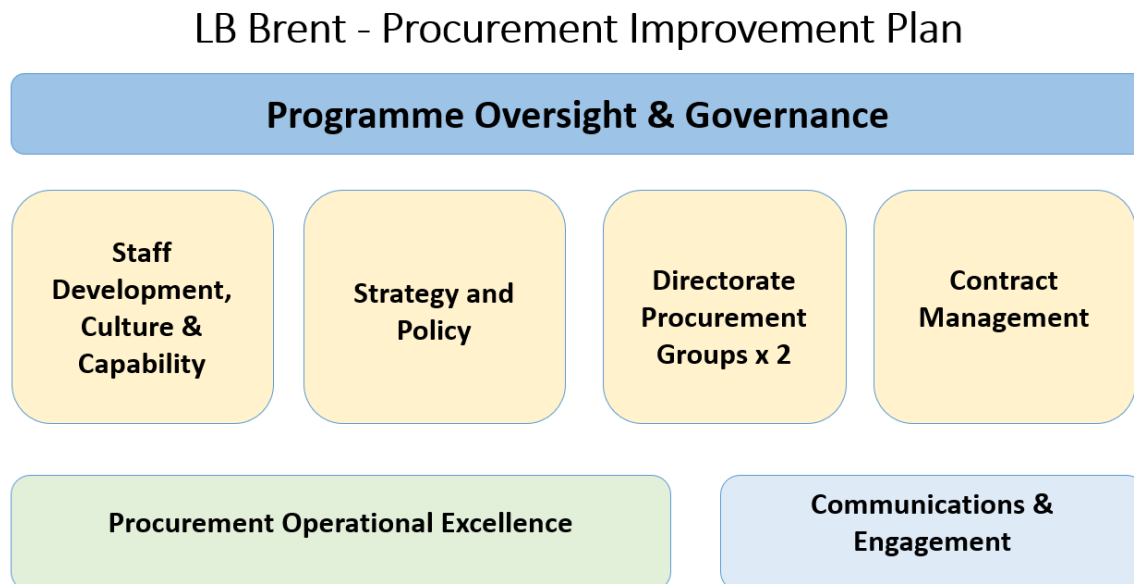


Figure 1: Brent's Procurement Improvement Programme structure

- 4.5 The scale of the PIP and the level of change and transformation it will deliver means improvements will be phased to be delivered over a 18-24 month period.
- 4.6 The governance arrangements in place to oversee delivery of the PIP include the following:
- The sponsoring Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) officer is 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 operates 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
 - Fortnightly progress review and updates through the Lead Member – Climate Change and Community Power Briefings
- 4.7 Good progress has been made at pace since endorsement of the PIP:

- **Governance:** The new Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management Assurance Board (CPCMAAB) has been established and has met several times since May 2025.
- **Governance and Engagement:** Project delivery briefs and plans setting out key objectives, outputs and activities have been drafted, reviewed and agreed with the membership of each PIP workstream, and will form the basis of the detailed PIP programme plan.
- **Engagement:** Cross-council officer representation for each workstream is 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, and prioritised and targeted recruitment campaigns have been launched.
- **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 being reviewed extensively by Officers.
- **Strategy and Policy:** A draft Social Value Policy and new Procurement Strategy approach are in progress.

4.8 This report is focussed on two of the recommendations from the Procurement peer review relating to the Strategy and Policy workstream:

1. A new Council Procurement Strategy aligned to the Council's priorities, the changed external environment and prevailing good practices should be drafted.
2. To review the definition of "local supplier" for Brent and how this should be adopted.

Emerging Procurement Strategy

4.9 Brent's current Procurement Strategy consists of five pillars: community wealth building, sustainability, circular economy, social value and ethical procurement, and active procurement, and covered the period 2020 – 2023.

4.10 A new Strategy needs to be developed aligned to our Borough Plan priorities, informed by peer review and audit findings, and leveraging opportunities from the changing national policy landscape. In addition, the Strategy will draw on the findings and recommendations from the current review of community wealth building practices in Brent that is being carried out by Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). This is due to report in November.

National Context

Procurement Act 2023 (PA23)

- 4.11 Public Sector Procurement is at a point of significant change with the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023 (PA23) and accompanying Procurement Regulations 2024, which came into force in February 2025. This is the first major reform of the rules since the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) in 2015 and represents a major shift to enhancing efficiency, flexibility and transparency across the procurement lifecycle.
- 4.12 The Act provides supportive mechanisms that will help facilitate transformative shifts in our procurement approach that will realise greater overall benefits for Brent. Early development of a new approach for our Procurement Strategy has aimed to reflect the benefits to ensure that our future procurement approach can make the most of these. Key opportunities are summarised in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Opportunities from the new Procurement Act 2023.

National Procurement Strategy 2022 (NPS) and National Procurement Policy Statement 2025 (NPPS)

- 4.13 The National Procurement Strategy 2022 also sets out local government's ambitions and priorities, focusing on three core themes: showing leadership, behaving commercially and achieving community benefits
- 4.14 Alongside the Procurement Act and Regulations, the government also issued the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) in February 2025. This is a statutory statement, setting out and communicating the wider policy objectives of the UK government. Contracting authorities are required to have regard to the NPPS and are expected to utilise it as a strategic guide. The NPPS identifies three key priorities:
- Driving **economic growth** and strengthening supply chains by giving SMEs and VCSEs a fair chance at public contracts, creating high quality jobs and championing innovation.
 - Delivering **social and economic value** that supports the Government's missions including by working in partnership across organisational boundaries.

- Ensuring the right **commercial capability** and standards are in place to procure and manage contracts effectively and to collaborate with other contracting authorities to **deliver best value**.

Emerging new Brent Procurement Strategy

- 4.15 Supporting the priorities of our Borough Plan is central to development of this Strategy, as well as alignment with the Council's wider Transformation agenda and Embrace Change portfolio, and the significantly changed national policy landscape.
- 4.16 Emerging priorities reflect national goals of the National Procurement Strategy (NPS) 2022, and adopt the three priorities of the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) 2025, in a way that reflects Brent's local context and strategic goals. This approach is one that many other Councils have sought to take in updating their Procurement Strategies.
- 4.17 Our overall vision is that Procurement services help to achieve council priorities by driving value for money and cost savings, optimising spend and creating a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. The emerging priorities set out a vision for how we will use procurement to deliver value for Brent through a focus on place, people and commercial capability to enable a fairer, more equal Brent.
- 4.18 The proposed Strategy is underpinned by an overarching principle of responsible procurement that seeks to ensure responsible, sustainable and ethical procurement practices are built into all stages of procurement processes, and three core priority themes that will guide actions. This is outlined in Figure 3 and below.

The proposed Strategy is based on three priorities, underpinned by a guiding principle of responsible procurement to ensure fairness and integrity in our procurement:

Underpinning principle - Responsible procurement:

Seek to ensure our procurement is responsible, sustainable and ethical, and where possible, embeds the following throughout the procurement lifecycle, in contracts and through supply chain expectations:

- Climate goals and sustainable procurement practices
- Ethical procurement practices.
- Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion

Borough Plan: A Cleaner, Greener Future

Priority 1: Community Wealth Building

- Increase spend with local* SMEs and VCSEs.
- Increase support for local* SMEs and VCSEs to access contracts and opportunities.
- Increase local employment, skills and learning opportunities.
- Work with suppliers to ensure they are committed to providing high quality, good jobs and fair pay.

*Borough Plan: Prosperity and Stability in Brent
NPPS: Driving economic growth*

Priority 2: Community Power

- Work in partnership and collaboration with contractors to strengthen local communities and tackle inequality in Brent.
- Leverage and target social value opportunities to deliver meaningful outcomes for residents, through a place-based approach.
- Use local intelligence to target opportunities.

*Borough Plan: Thriving Communities – Enabling our Communities
NPPS: Delivering social and economic value
NPS: Achieving community benefits*

Priority 3: Commercial capability, leadership and innovation

- Strengthen commercial capability.
- Uphold good contract management.
- Foster a culture of leadership, innovation and continuous improvement across procurement and teams involved in the procurement cycle.
- Prioritise workforce learning and development, nurturing and developing skills and talent.

NPPS: Commercial capability

Figure 3: Emerging principle and priorities of new Procurement Strategy

- 4.19 The underpinning principle of responsible procurement will seek to ensure that, where possible, considerations of the following are embedded throughout the procurement lifecycle:

- Climate goals and sustainable procurement practices
- Ethical procurement practices
- Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion

4.20 The emerging three core priority themes of the strategy support national goals by adapting the priorities of the National Procurement Policy Statement 2025 and closely align with our local context and strategic goals. The priorities focus on place and the economy, people and social value, and internal commercial capability, leadership and innovation.

Priority 1: Community Wealth Building

- Increase spend with local SME's and VCSE'S.
- Increase support for local SME's and VCSE's to access contracts and opportunities.
- Increase local employment, skills and learning opportunities.
- Work with suppliers to ensure they are committed to providing high quality, good jobs and fair pay
- Employment rights and high quality jobs:

Priority 2: Community Power

- Work in partnership and collaboration with contractors to strengthen local communities and tackle inequality in Brent.
- Leverage and target social value opportunities to deliver meaningful outcomes for residents, through a place-based approach.
- Use local intelligence to target opportunities.
- Adoption of range of service delivery models including in-sourcing

Priority 3: Commercial capability, leadership and innovation

- Strengthen commercial capability.
- Uphold good contract management.
- Foster a culture of leadership, innovation and continuous improvement across procurement and teams involved in the procurement cycle.
- Prioritise workforce learning and development, nurturing and developing skills and talent
- Capacity and capability building and training for local suppliers

Next steps

4.21 In reviewing the report, the Committee is asked to consider:

1. Does the proposed direction of travel feel right for Brent?
2. Are there any elements that should be strengthened, added or removed?
3. Consider and comment on the whether exploring a threshold on certain higher value contracts to ensure that the business we are engaging with pay the London living wage and recognises Trade Unions.

- 4.22 The Strategy plans are currently being reviewed by various groups internally to feedback on and endorse the direction of travel. This includes engagement through the Procurement Improvement Programme steering group and Strategy and Policy workstream, the Commissioning, Procurement, Contract Management and Assurance Board and senior management, engagement with service leads through Departmental Procurement Groups, wider opportunity for all staff feedback through workshops, and formal consultation as required. Table 1 below outlines the engagement plan.

4.23

Table 1: Summary engagement plan

Activity	Indicative timeline
Input from Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) and review of Community Wealth Building for Brent	October-November
Officer engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal teams including Procurement and Climate • Departmental Procurement Groups • Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management Assurance Board, • Procurement Improvement Programme governance channels, • Senior Management Group • CMT 	October - November
Member and Cabinet engagement	November – Scrutiny February - Cabinet
Supplier and business engagement	November – January
Third sector engagement	November - January

- 4.24 As we continue to refine our new Procurement Strategy with view of implementation from May 2025, and implement the actions arising from the Procurement Review, we will refresh the mechanisms we use to measure and report on performance. In particular, we want to better understand the impact of activity on key themes. For example, how we measure and report on the use of local suppliers and businesses, and how we might measure the impact on the local economy of progressive procurement and the work on CWB. Procurement KPI's are currently being reviewed.
- 4.25 We plan to reestablish a form of Annual Report covering the impact of procurement, as well as relevant Community Wealth Building and social value activity.

Definition of “local” and engagement with Brent suppliers

The challenge

- 4.26 The nature of local authority boundaries, especially in London, means that businesses operate in the geographies that best meet the needs of their clients/customers. Similarly, their employees may live within, adjacent to or some distance from the council where they are based. Where their staff spend their money or pay council tax is only passingly related to where it is earned.
- 4.27 Local authorities meet the challenges of supporting local businesses in a variety of ways. Where Local Enterprise Partnerships exist, for example focused around major conurbations, then a naturally defined cohort may exist. In London where relatively small populations of suppliers exist in neighbouring councils, each with relatively small differences in character, then constraining engagement to only one council reduces scale of the potential benefits and the return on effort.
- 4.28 A further challenge is that many local supplier, particularly micro and smaller businesses are often entirely unsuited to become direct suppliers to a local authority – despite their aspirations. Even the simplest of procurement processes – required by law – coupled with the council’s policy requirements place a considerable burden of cost and time on small businesses which they often lack the skills or resource to undertake. Even a medium sized enterprise will be selective on where it deploys its bidding capability.
- 4.29 There is also significant additional cost to the council from managing a much larger pool of smaller suppliers including the administration of all the contracts, purchase orders and invoices required. This in a time of constrained budget.
- 4.30 However, as detailed below, there are some viable approaches that could be adopted.

Definition of “local”

- 4.31 The following table outlines some of the definitions that Brent could adopt, along with the implications. The Committee is asked to comment on and provide feedback on these options.

Table 2: Options for definitions of “local” that Brent could adopt

	Definition	Benefits	Limitations
1	Organisations strictly within the boundaries of Brent	The organisations that pay business rates to LBB and use local services. Their employees are often residents within LBB. Easy to define purely on geography. Provides a focussed cohort to work with.	Relatively small group of organisations Limited return on effort.

2	Organisations within the 7 Councils in the West London Alliance i.e. Barnet, Brent, Ealing, H&F, Harrow, Hillingdon & Hounslow.	Group of LAs with an existing governance and ongoing collaboration and joint commissioning of contracts.	Brent is towards the eastern fringe of this group and some suppliers may not consider Brent as “local”. Risk it could be too big a community.
3	Organisations within Brent and most councils directly bordering Brent. i.e. Barnet, Harrow, Ealing, H&F, Camden.	Proximities mean locations are more manageable for delivery/supply of services. With the addition of other LAs roughly approximates to the health region.	No natural allegiance of these councils at this time
4	Within a defined number of miles from the centre of or the boundary of Brent.	Approach is more focussed on LBB as the “central” location.	Is it clearly definable or too arbitrary.

- 4.32 Whichever location is used should be caveated that when searching solely by post code may give false information if an organisation’s address is a head office or invoicing address. One solution is to base the location on where workforce is based locally – i.e. their office or depot. This is information that contract managers should be aware of but may not be formally recorded.

Engagement with Brent suppliers

- 4.33 In late 2024/early 2025 a company called Brandiun was engaged to undertake some supplier readiness work. This was UKSPF funded and delivered in partnership with the Economic Development Team. They held 36 x 1.5 hour one to one sessions with Brent based SMEs and their programme report was issued in May 2025.
- 4.34 Some themes that emerge from their report and from ad hoc, informal contact with local suppliers are:
- a) They would benefit from a “space” to meet and connect with peers and other businesses
 - b) Welcomed potential of regular spaces / briefings on particular topics or new opportunities.
 - c) Most SMEs are inexperienced in bidding to the public sector
 - d) They fear a low ROI from not winning bids and that bid lots are “too big”.
 - e) The needs of varying sizes of “SMEs” are vastly different and it would be erroneous to adopt a one size fits all approach. For example, early-stage micro businesses (1-5 staff, c£200k revenue) have very different needs from emerging SMEs (15-50 staff, >£1m revenue) which differ from established SMEs (60+ staff, >£5m revenue).
- 4.35 While it has yet to be established if there were any sustainable benefits that have arisen from Brandiun’s project, they made a series of recommendations.

Some of these recommendations, plus examples of good practices in other council and the implementation of council and member priorities inform the following suggested approaches for PCG to consider.

Summary Recommendations to improve engagement with local businesses

1. It is intended to publish externally an annual procurement plan and update it quarterly. In addition, a summary of this will be issued to Members for them to share it with suppliers local to them, or at least regularly be signposted to the information. An annual procurement report will also be published
2. Consider the scope for the development of a rolling programme of online briefings about how to do business with Brent.
3. Consider a “Buy Local” priority in the development of the new council Procurement Strategy and the Social Value Policy.
4. Where appropriate require large, first tier suppliers to support/engage with local organisations as part of their supply chain, or as part of their Social Value commitments.
5. As part of the culture development within Procurement and rolled out through directorate procurement groups, prioritise spending with local suppliers – for example with smaller contract “lots”, and more market engagement and preparation.
6. Develop a plan for “Meet the Buyer” events ahead of large council and other external public sector organisations, including participation from the council’s first tier suppliers.

Measuring and Reporting on Impact

- 4.36 It is important that we measure, understand and report on the impact of procurement activity. This is necessary to ensure we know what works, what difference is being made for residents, the extent to which we are realising value for money and how effective and efficient Brent’s procurement is.
- 4.37 As we refine our new Procurement Strategy and implement the actions arising from the Procurement Review, we will refresh the mechanisms we use to measure and report on performance. In particular, we want to better understand the impact of activity on key themes. For example, how we measure and report on the use of local suppliers and businesses, and how we might measure the impact on the local economy of progressive procurement and the work on CWB.
- 4.38 We plan to reestablish a form of Annual Report covering the impact of procurement, as well as relevant Community Wealth Building and social value activity.

5.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 5.1 The development of the emerging Procurement Strategy approach builds on previous engagement and feedback from members and stakeholders. The proposals have also been shared with the procurement consultant who led the

Peer Review, to test alignment with its recommendations and emerging national best practice. The Lead Cabinet Member Climate Change and Community Power has been engaged and inputted on the draft proposals. Section 4.23 summarises the additional engagement that will take place.

6.0 Financial Considerations

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

7.0 Legal Considerations

- 7.1 The Procurement Improvement Programme and the development of the Council's refreshed Procurement Strategy support's the Council's compliance with the Procurement Act 2023 and Best Value obligations.

8.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 8.1 The proposed approach strengthens the Council's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion by embedding these guiding principles in procurement and commissioning practice. It encourages suppliers to create opportunities for Brent residents who face barriers to employment or participation and supports a diverse local supply chain, including small businesses and VCSE organisations.
- 8.2 The approach also contributes to reducing health and socio-economic inequalities through locally targeted initiatives aimed at high need areas, informed by the Social Progress Index.

9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 9.1 Environmental sustainability and climate action will be supported by the Procurement Strategy and is also a key priority themes within the supporting Social Value Policy draft approach. Suppliers will be encouraged to demonstrate measurable contributions to the Council's Climate and Ecological Strategy (2021-2030) and associated Climate Programmes. This could include, but not be limited to, carbon reduction initiatives, waste and resource minimisation and promotion of circular economy principles, sustainable travel initiatives and infrastructure, enhancements to biodiversity and green spaces, infrastructure and initiatives to support climate adaptation and resilience.
- 9.2 The revised approach will also promote local delivery with the intention of minimising the environmental impact of contracted services across the whole supply chain.

10.0 Communication Considerations

- 10.1 A communications plan will be developed following endorsement of the final Procurement Strategy to promote the new approach internally and externally. This will include clear messaging for staff, suppliers and partners, supported by bite-size learning sessions and guidance materials. It will also closely align with the communications for social value.
- 10.2 Public communication will focus on highlighting how social value commitments are delivering benefits for Brent's residents and communities.

Related documents for reference:

[February 2025 – Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee – Commissioning, Procurement, Community Wealth Building and Social Value](#)

Report sign off:

Rachel Crossley

Corporate Director, Service Reform and Strategy