

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Audit and Standards Advisory Committee</b> 24 March 2026</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Corporate Director Service Reform and Strategy</b></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Lead Member – Cabinet Member for Climate Action and Community Power (Cllr Jake Rubin)</b></p>
<p><b>Procurement Review and Improvement Programme Update</b></p>	

<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> 02089371738

## 1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides an update on progress to date on delivery of the Procurement Improvement Programme (PIP).

## 2.0 Recommendations

That Audit and Standards Advisory Committee:

2.1 Note progress to date in delivering the Procurement Improvement Programme.

## 3.0 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

3.1 The Procurement Improvement Programme supports delivery of the **Brent Borough Plan 2023 – 2027**. It aligns with three of the priorities in the Borough Plan: Prosperity and Stability; A Cleaner, Greener Future; and Thriving

Communities and reflects the Borough Plan's commitment that sustainability is central to the growth of the borough and local economy.

- 3.2 The Council participated in the **LGA's Corporate Peer Challenge** in January 2025, which provide the following feedback/recommendations around procurement:

*“Commissioning, procurement and contract management are key areas for development. The peer team identified a cautious approach, with low appetite for risk and limited innovation in procurement practices. To address these challenges, there is a need to foster greater professional curiosity and innovation within procurement and commissioning, ensuring that the Council takes a more strategic, market-aware and forward-thinking approach. There remains a significant opportunity for the Council to secure greater levels of social value and drive efficiencies through commissioning [and contract management] - an increasingly important factor given the Council's growing financial pressures.”*

- 3.3 The Procurement Improvement Programme responds to this feedback as well as to the findings of the **Procurement Peer Review** (April 2025).
- 3.4 The Council's new Procurement Strategy (developed as a core part of the PIP) is consistent with the Council's broader commitments to change the way that it delivers public services, so that they deliver the most value for residents and support them to live their best lives. It is also consistent with the Council's commitment to work more closely with partners to deliver good outcomes for residents and communities.

#### **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. The review made the following key recommendations. The Executive Summary is attached as appendix one.

- 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 was established to respond to the review. This was endorsed by Corporate Management Team in May 2025. The PIP has several core workstreams covering the following themes:

- Staff development, culture and capability
- Strategy and policy
- Directorate engagement, governance and compliance
- Contract management
- Operational excellence

6.2 The PIP introduced the following vision for Procurement, which has been adopted by the new Procurement Strategy and that drives all improvement activity:

***“We will harness innovative and high-quality procurement to create opportunity, tackle inequality, drive sustainability and deliver the best possible value for Brent’s communities”***

6.3 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 provides a scrutiny, challenge and assurance role in relation to commissioning, procurement and contract management, including delivery of the PIP. The CPCMAB operates in two 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

## **7.0 Summary of progress to date**

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

### **7.1 Staff Development, Culture and Capability**

- A new interim Head of Procurement has been in post since July 2025, and six new permanent appointments have been made for previously “hard to fill” vacant roles.
- This addresses the previously long-standing use of agency and interim staff.
- The level of turnover in the service has reduced, enabling stability and supporting the strengthening of relationships and engagement across the Council
- A series of culture workshops are underway with staff to embed new ways of working and to continue re-focusing the service on business partnering with services

### **7.2 Strategy and Policy**

7.2.1 A stream of work focused on developing the Council’s Procurement Strategy 2026-2030, an accompanying Social Value Statement and other initiatives such as Match My Project to broker supplier social value capacity against local needs:

- Procurement Strategy 2026-2030 has been developed and was approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2026. The strategy will ‘go-live’ in April 2026. Further information is set out in section 8.

- A refreshed Social Value Statement, supporting the Procurement Strategy has been developed and will also 'go-live' in April 2026
- Partnered with Match My Project to make social value work better for residents, community and businesses – this is an online connection and matchmaking platform that will be used through both procurement and as a means to signpost businesses and community groups to seek matches. This is currently being soft launched with up to 20 businesses and 20 community groups engaged to date
- Commissioned Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) to review current approaches to community wealth building and make recommendations on how Brent Council can further develop and strengthen its approach – ensuring that its supports current and emerging priorities and makes the best possible impact for people and place. Work undertaken by CLES has directly informed the Procurement Strategy
- Held first 'Winning Council Business' workshop for Brent VCSE organisations and local small-medium enterprises (SMEs) on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2026. A 'Meet the Buyer' Event is scheduled for 24<sup>th</sup> March.

### 7.3 Improve Directorate Engagement

- Two Directorate Procurement Groups have been established, each covering two directorates to strengthen relationships with service areas. These are continuing to develop a better understanding of directorate needs with the ability to meet them
- These forums are used to consult on ideas for improvements, clarify roles and responsibilities and act as a channel for two-way communication and feedback between Procurement and service areas
- The Procurement Peer Review recommended that roles and responsibilities between Procurement, service areas and other support services be clarified and understood. The RACI model has been used to develop a framework addresses this. The RACI defines the level of ownership for a project and for specific activities and uses the following definitions:
  - **Responsible** – the person/people who undertake the defined role or activity. There may often be more than one role that is responsible.
  - **Accountable** – the single role or function held accountable to ensure the activity is delivered. They may not necessarily undertake the activity
  - **Consulted** – those whose view are sought and provide input as part of an activity
  - **Informed** – those who are informed of the outcome and not involved or consulted in the process

### 7.4 Contract Management

- Over 70 Council contracts have been reviewed and "segmented" into tiers to determine the most effective level of contract management. This pilot approach is now being further expanded to other contracts
- The highest risk/highest profile contracts – deemed Platinum – are reported to the Council's Assurance Board

- Brokered a training and support offer through Local Partnerships that includes 16 days consultancy and development support aligned to contract management (free of charge)
- Accepted onto national Contract Management Pioneer Programme (CMPP) providing accredited training routes for contract management
- Practitioner training on contract management is being provided for 19 contract managers funded by the Cabinet Office, a substantial investment in contract management capability in the organisation
- A new, more robust contract register is currently being implemented to better manage contracts and improve visibility of expiring contracts. This will be implemented in summer 2026
- A new Contract Management Framework has been developed to replace the old and out-dated version and bring it into line with the new Procurement Strategy, Improvement Programme and better support the Council's overall contract management approach – this is being launched on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2026
- A new Contract Management Community of Practice has been established – this brings officers together to oversee and maintain continuous improvement in contract management and will agree changes and improvements to the Contract Management Framework post launch in April 2026. It will also contribute to creating and maintaining a culture of high standards, officer confidence, and delivery against organisational objectives

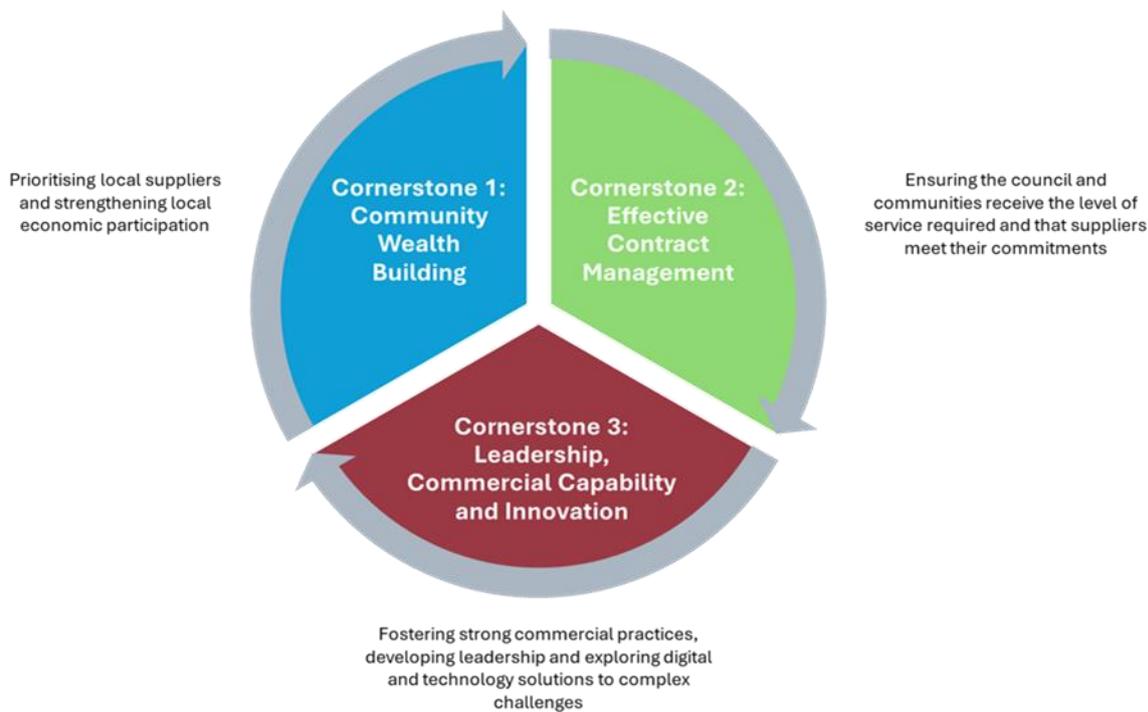
## **7.5 Operational Excellence**

- 7.5.1 This workstream is focused on modernising procurements through improvements to processes, monitoring performance through KPIs, and analysing waivers and contract extensions to identify underlying causes to address.
- 7.5.2 It also includes the Council's partnership with Oxygen Finance Fast Track Payment Initiative. A priority has been to accelerate the use and impact of the initiative to support effective use of resources
- 7.5.3 Growth of 111% in YTD and forecast savings of £214k and £330k in 2026/27 have been realised to date

## **8.0 Procurement Strategy 2026-2030**

- 8.1 Brent Council's previous procurement strategy covered the period 2020-2023. Since then, the legislative context for procurement has evolved significantly. The Procurement Act 2023 and accompanying Procurement Regulations 2024 came into force in February 2025 and represent a major shift towards enhancing efficiency, flexibility and transparency across the procurement lifecycle. The key objectives of the Procurement Act 2023 are:
- Creating a simpler and more flexible commercial system which better meets the government's national objectives
  - Opening up public procurement to new entrants such as social enterprises and small businesses

- Embedding transparency throughout the commercial lifecycle
- 8.2 The National Procurement Strategy 2022 focuses on three core themes: showing leadership, behaving commercially and achieving community benefits.
- 8.3 In February 2025 the government released the National Procurement Policy Statement. This sets out the government's wider procurement policy objectives, which local authorities are required to have regard to and use as a strategic guide. It 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**.
- 8.4 This legislative and policy context, alongside the Procurement Improvement Programme has informed the development of the new Procurement Strategy.
- 8.5 [The Procurement Strategy 2026-2030](#) sets the guiding principles and priorities for future procurement activity in Brent, and how the Council will use its spending power to deliver value for Brent's residents and communities. The Strategy recognises the need for the Council to ensure procurement is delivering value for money, given the significant financial pressures facing the Council, while also ensuring that procurement delivers wider benefits to residents.
- 8.6 The Strategy is based on three key cornerstones or pillars, which are:
1. Community Wealth Building
  2. Effective Contract Management
  3. Leadership, Commercial Capability and Innovation



## 9.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

9.1 The Lead Member for Climate Action and Community Power has been engaged throughout the development and delivery of the programme and the procurement strategy. The Procurement Strategy has been informed by the independent peer review of Brent's procurement function and approach that was undertaken in 2025. As part of this review, there was extensive engagement with members, officers and a small number of suppliers.

## 10.0 Financial Considerations

10.1 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. The Procurement Strategy commits to new training, systems, governance structures and data improvements. These upfront investments can be contained within existing budgets. In the medium term, these measures, including contract management improvements, will result in savings and cost avoidance for the Council through tighter supplier performance management and greater control of risk and scope creep.

## 11.0 Legal Considerations

11.1 The Procurement Improvement Programme support's the Council's compliance with the Procurement Act 2023 and Best Value obligations. The Procurement Strategy must comply with, and be delivered in accordance with, all applicable UK legislation and guidance, including the Procurement Act 2023, the Public Contract Regulations 2015, the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 and the Equality Act 2010.

- 11.2 Officers in Legal Services will continue to provide support and guidance in the implementation of the Procurement Strategy, and any necessary amendments to contract and tender documents.

## **12.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

- 12.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty, as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a “protected characteristic” and those who do not share that protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The Council also internally recognises care experience and socio-economic status as protected characteristics.
- 12.2 The strategic intent of the draft Procurement Strategy strengthens the Council’s commitment to EDI, with the explicit purpose of using procurement to support the local economy and increase local employment, skills and learning opportunities. This will strengthen local communities and help to tackle inequality in Brent. One of the key actions of the new Strategy is to increase contractor collaboration on tackling poverty and inequality. Suppliers for Platinum, Gold, and Silver contracts will be required to complete Modern Slavery and EDI due diligence. Non-compliance will constitute a material breach of contract, emphasising the Council’s commitment to ensuring that contractors uphold these commitments in practice.

## **13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

- 13.1 The Council is committed to adopting a sustainable approach for all products and services it procures and to harness its purchasing power to help tackle climate change holistically, in alignment with the key themes within the Borough’s Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy.
- 13.2 The Council has adopted a stand-alone Procurement Sustainability Policy, which underpins this approach. It also utilises the West London Sustainable Procurement Charter as a mandatory section for all suppliers to complete as part of major procurements. The new Procurement Strategy developed as part of the Procurement Improvement Programme references the significance of environmental sustainability within the new cornerstones and underpinning principles.

## **14.0 Communication Considerations**

Following the adoption of the Procurement Strategy, it will be worked into a designed version for publication. There will be communication with officers so that they understand the contents of the Strategy and what it means for them. There will also be communication with residents, key suppliers, prospective

suppliers, VCSE organisations and other partners about the new Strategy, including via the Council's website and other communications channels.

**Report sign off:**

***Rhodri Rowlands***

Director Strategic Commissioning, Capacity  
Building and Engagement

