

Oxford City Council

Corporate Procurement Strategy 2026 - 2029



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COMMERCIAL PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2026- 2029

1. BACKGROUND

Welcome to the 3rd iteration of the Corporate Procurement Strategy designed to set out the proposed actions for the coming 3 years.

This Procurement Strategy has been prepared following the introduction and commencement of the new Procurement Act 2023 in February 2025. It is mindful of the current financial climate, and the proposed changes under Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Whilst this strategy sets out the aims and goals for the January 2026 - December 2028 period it will be reviewed on an annual basis, to reflect any changes in both national and local policies and priorities. The following points are relevant to this strategy.

- £341 billion was spent through public procurement in 2023/24 (latest figures from the House of Commons Library). This figure has risen annually and procurement accounts for about a third of public sector spending. Gross spending on public sector procurement was £434 billion in 2024/25 across the UK with the biggest increase in the health sector ¹
- Most procurement spending falls under the category ‘purchases of goods and services’
- The Council has around 750 live contracts and spends circa £220M per annum on procuring goods, services and works including Capital, or £130M excluding Capital.
- This Procurement Strategy has been designed to align the Council’s values and priorities along with the procurement strategies of the Council’s wholly owned companies to ensure that the group benefit from both financial savings and efficiencies from joint procurements and frameworks wherever possible
- Procurement will work with all of the Council service areas, its wholly owned companies within the Group (Oxford Direct Services Limited (ODSL), Oxford Direct Services Trading Limited (ODSTL), Oxford City Housing Limited (OCHL) and Oxford City Housing Development Limited (OCHDL) trading as OxPlace to understand the environment it is working within and the impact to the entity or service area to enable effective planning of how procurement can support.
- This procurement Strategy has also been designed to align with the requirements under the Procurement Act 2023, notably to incorporate the National Procurement Policy Statement² (NPPS) into the procurement processes where relevant.
- This Procurement Strategy supports a culture of devolved procurement within the constraints of the Public Procurement Regulations and the Councils’ Constitution.
- This strategy further embeds the council’s commitment to Community Wealth Building, delivering Social Value through procurement and strengthening Contract management that began with the previous strategy.
- As part of the Councils sustainability goals, this strategy looks to further integrate environmental, social, and ethical considerations into purchasing decisions to create long-term value for the Council and society. This means looking beyond just cost and quality to consider the entire lifecycle of a product or service, including its environmental impact, fair labour practices and contribution to goals like waste reduction and carbon emission cuts.

2. SETTING THE SCENE FOR PROCUREMENT

2.1 OVERVIEW

Procurement is the process through which an organisation establishes contracts for goods, works, services and utilities.

The Procurement Team within the Financial Services Directorate at the Council has oversight of only a small part of the Council’s total budget and cannot manage all day-to-day dealings between the Council and its suppliers. Therefore, the whole Council needs to have an awareness of procurement best practice and their role in deploying them.

Public procurement is governed by a legal and regulatory framework which is aimed at promoting economic competition. Failure to adhere to public procurement law can expose the Council to costly legal challenges. In that context this strategy is intended to support compliance with the Council’s Contract procedure Rules (the Constitution), the UK Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the Procurement Act 2023 and the fundamental procurement principles of transparency, equal treatment, non-discrimination and mutual recognition.

Procurement starts with an identified need, and seeks to put in place a contract, or contracts which effectively meet that need. This involves proactive engagement with stakeholders reviewing the procurement pipeline, spending plans and procurement options, the formal award of contracts and the management and monitoring of contracts that are already in place.

Procurement will continue to support this by providing full visibility to internal and external stakeholders and suppliers by:

- The monitoring of Small Medium Size Enterprises (SME’s) and Local spend i.e. suppliers with an OX postcode;
- Responding to requests for new supplier set ups (when a supplier has been awarded a contract) within 7 days (in conjunction with the Payments Team);
- The publishing of transparency reports quarterly on the Council’s website;
- The publishing of the Council’s contracts on the Council website containing contract expiration dates;
- The running of open, fair and transparent tender processes within Regulation guidelines;
- Supporting Suppliers by holding “How to Tender” workshops
- Supporting Suppliers by holding “Meet the Buyer” events
- Supporting service areas with the appointment of commercial Business Partners who attend service area meetings when the focus will be on the procurement pipeline and supplier performance.
- Providing further expert advice and assistance for the procurement process including contract monitoring, contract management training, and training in other aspects of procurement

3. SETTING THE DIRECTION FOR PROCUREMENT

3.1 OUR PURPOSE

¹ [Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis 2025](#)

² [National Procurement Policy Statement - GOV.UK](#)

³ [Common Areas of Spend definitions - Procurement](#)

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Procurement is an essential business function encompassing a range of activities enabling the Council to obtain goods, works, services or utilities delivering value for money compliantly. This is achieved through leadership of procurement for the Council, ownership and accountability for the sourcing process, communication of purpose, process and outcomes and working in collaboration with Council entities, external authorities and or buying organisations. To achieve this a Procurement Board was set up in September 2024 and meets on a monthly basis ensuring the council is up to date with any changes in the Regulations, the Constitution and anything else that may impact the delivery of Value for Money.

The Procurement Team consist of 6 professionals with MCIPS qualification or working towards MCIPS, all with a vast amount of experience and knowledge.

The team, in June 2025 moved to a commercial Business Partnering approach to procurement which is a strategic role to act as a bridge between the Councils service areas and the procurement function, contributing to the overall strategic direction of the Council.

The contract register which records Government Commercial standard categorisation is split into 14 categories, with the main spend from the top 25 contracts aligned to Regeneration and Economy, Information Technology, Construction and Communities and Citizens.

Although our primary purpose is to ensure that the Council has the appropriate contractual provision to allow the delivery of its core functions there are a number of activities which the procurement team lead on and are intrinsic to the success of our Strategy:

- Management of the procurement Register and Pipeline
- Contract monitoring
- Contract Procedure Rules
- Standardised Documentation
- Supplier Engagement
- Procurement Training
- Procurement Processes, Systems and Integration
- Commercialisation and Income Generation
- Social Value

The level of data we record and monitor is used to evidence that our actions and impacts are supportive of our Local and National Drivers.

The Council is mindful that the impact of procurement is far greater than processes objectives and principles and that effective procurement can incorporate a wide-ranging socio-economic agenda. The Council is committed to applying the approaches and lessons of the Community Wealth Building movement (a partnership initiative that aims to redirect economic power into the hands of communities in Oxford, by supporting locally led, community-owned enterprises and including them in the infrastructure and purchasing frameworks of larger institutions)– where local institutions use their assets, spending power and influence to build a truly inclusive and generative local economy. That means at the heart of this strategy sits the aim to deliver an inclusive economy, whereby the Council uses its purchasing power to retain wealth that benefits the local economy, influences sectors to provide an Oxford Living Wage and unleashes the potential of the voluntary and third sector. In taking this approach, the Council will not only deliver a successful local economy for everyone, but by leveraging our power can help address a wide range of ethnic and social disparities, push employers to become inclusive, significantly contribute to our ambition to be zero carbon and deliver value for money for Oxford’s citizens.

3.2 AMBITION

To be a highly effective customer focused team with processes and systems in place to ensure the timely award of fit for purpose contracts minimising the risk to the Council of challenge, reducing costs and increasing quality whilst supporting localisation and the delivery of social value specifically to Oxford. To apply innovation to streamline the procure to pay process to decrease procurement cycle time, decrease the complexity of the process and increase efficiency.

3.3 VISION

The Procurement Strategy plays an indirect role in support of the Council’s five key priorities (Good, affordable homes, Strong, fair economy, Thriving communities, Zero carbon Oxford and A well run council) by adding value to all procurements for our stakeholders through strategic thinking, efficient process integration, and exceptional customer care and by offering our services outside of the Council where practical to do so promoting the long term interests of the communities we represent.

4. OUR AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND KEY PRIORITIES

4.1 AIMS

Procurement commits to the following to support the delivery of the Corporate Priorities:

- To increase spend with Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SME’s), Local (OX Postcodes) and VCSE’s (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) Organisations. The Government within the National Procurement Policy Statement has set out a requirement to drive economic growth and the strengthening of supply chains giving small and medium sized enterprises and voluntary, community and social enterprises a fair chance at public contracts, and have stated that all central government departments must set a 3 year target for direct spend with SME’s (from 1st April 2025) and a two year target for direct spend with VCSEs (From 1st April 2026). In-line with this, procurement will identify VCSE suppliers in Oxford and ascertain before April 2026 those that the Council currently engage with in order to baseline and set a target of spend with VCSE’s from April 2026 onwards.
- To increase understanding of and to deliver the benefits of Social Value and Community Wealth Building;
- To support Equality Diversity and Inclusion by embedding principles in the procurement process;
- To support Sustainable requirements in the procurement process using the Sustainability Impact Assessment;
- To treat suppliers and customers with respect and courtesy, and respond to their needs with a sense of urgency;
- To encourage suppliers to implement the Oxford Living Wage and or Living Wage Foundation Rate;
 - Procurement will seek to promote and increase the number of suppliers that adopt the Oxford Living wage or Living Wage Foundation rate on supply of services or works by incorporating the requirement into both tender documents and terms and conditions;
- Work with all the council entities and other authorities across Oxfordshire;
- Promote opportunities for local businesses either directly with the Council or indirectly through contracts that it holds with prime contractors;
- Utilise the procurement portal to support the reserving (not direct award) of below threshold SME, VCSE and local contracts (set up a database of local suppliers that could be approached to tender for below threshold requirements). This will still need to be in-line with the requirements of the Councils Constitution, the achievement of value for money and the use of good commercial judgement.
- Ensure the Council delivers on the procurement of ethical and sustainable goods / services and works;
- Embed net zero in procurement;

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- Procurement will ensure that where practical to do so, climate change adaptations will be incorporated into major projects at all stages of the procurement exercise;
- Promote “Selling to the Council” on its website [About Selling to the Council | Oxford City Council](#) and by the holding of annual Meet the Buyer Events.

In the above context, delivery of the Council’s priorities, including better outcomes from public services and regeneration of places, requires resourcefulness and Procurement is responding to this requirement by maximising value for money – gaining further social value benefits, supporting stakeholders in the use of frameworks and other procurement portals like the digital marketplace where value for money can be demonstrated. It will create commercial opportunities – promoting revenue generation through promotion and support of the Council’s two wholly owned companies. It will also support smarter ways of working – embracing innovation, collaboration and embedding change.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

Procurement is a continuously evolving area and with the recent implementation of the Procurement Act 2023, significant budgetary constraints and the Local Government Reorganisation it is important that procurement not only delivers fit for purpose goods, works, services and or Utilities, but also ensures that it is innovative, agile and delivers on value for money.

The overarching objective is to achieve the best commercial results, whilst supporting key social outcomes that meet Oxford’s needs strategically; creating opportunities for local people, and encouraging spend with local SMEs, social enterprises, co-operatives and voluntary bodies and organisations committed to environmental improvement by:

Considering throughout the commissioning cycle what community benefits can be derived through social value, and where building provisions for such in all our contracts is beneficial;

Incorporating social and environmental aspects into specifications award criteria and contract conditions where appropriate and proportionate to what is being procured or provided;

Promoting innovation, employment and social inclusion, protection of the environment, energy efficiency and combating climate change; and

Creating and nurturing a vibrant, healthy, innovative, competitive rich and representative diverse marketplace of suppliers reflecting Oxford localities that include and encourage small business, mutual, charities, community groups, co- operatives and social enterprises;

Varying the extent to which social value might be measured by the Council. Some contracts will be well placed to deliver greater social value in the communities they serve than others.

The Council is committed to sustainable procurement and its procurement activities are not solely based on the economic factors but aim to achieve the best value based on the whole life costs, the associated risks, measures of success and implications for the society and environment.

Procurement is focused on developing its approach to how it assesses, manages and monitors the use of community benefits in its contracts to ensure the additional benefits offered by the Council’s suppliers will deliver the best possible social value for the communities of Oxford City.

Further details can be found on the “Selling to the Council” web pages. [Supplier's Guide – Oxford City Council](#)

4.3 KEY PRIORITIES

The Group Finance Director (Section 151 Officer) and the Strategic Procurement Manager will be responsible for the delivery of the Key Priorities as detailed below and captured in an Action Tracker at appendix 2.

- Social value and climate change
 - Re-tendering during the period of this Strategy the Procurement portal
 - Collaborative procurement
 - Yearly Constitutional review
 - Template document review (as and when required)
 - Further embed the new procurement regulations
 - Commercial focus
 - Contract Management
 - Improve procurement skills throughout the Council
 - Maintenance of the Contract Register
 - Transparency reporting
- Ensuring Equality and Diversity, Sustainability and other factors are considered in the procurement process where relevant to do so.

5. MEASURING AND MONITORING OUR PERFORMANCE

Procurement monitors key indicators linked to its activity which are tracked over a Financial Year.

5.1 SPEND

The tables below detail spend for the council, OCHL, ODSL and ODSTL for the last 4financial years (includes grant payments).

2021/22	External Supplier Spend £	Inter-OCC Company Spend £	Business Grants	Total Spend £
Council Revenue	31,499,484	36,948,453	16,628,603	85,076,540
Council Capital	62,269,858	8,576,557		70,846,414
ODSL	7,629,735	4,473,456		12,103,191
ODSTL	1,213,044	191,131		1,404,175
OCHL	14,359,303	781,111		15,140,414
Total	116,971,423	50,970,707	16,628,603	184,570,734

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Notes:	
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2022/23	External Supplier Spend £	Inter-OCC Company Spend £	Business Grants	Total Spend £
Council Revenue	25,644,117	42,801,680	3,158,725	71,604,522
Council Capital	49,792,217	26,497,563		76,289,781
ODSL	25,836,188	2,867,197		28,703,386
ODSTL	3,342,073	10,174,883		13,516,956
OCHL	14,586,290	585,457		15,171,747
Total	119,200,886	82,926,780	3,158,725	205,286,391
Notes:				
2023/24	External Supplier Spend £	Inter-OCC Company Spend £	Business Grants	Total Spend £
Council Revenue	26,570,866	47,564,736	4,705,171	78,840,773
Council Capital	26,301,075	24,686,734		50,987,810
ODSL	23,016,928	4,612,284		27,629,212
ODSTL	4,955,345	7,706,870		12,662,215
OCHL	3,928,351	1,804,185		5,732,536
Total	84,772,565	86,374,808	4,705,171	175,852,544
Notes:				
2024/25	External Supplier Spend £	Inter-OCC Company Spend £	Business Grants	Total Spend £
Council Revenue	37,660,159	48,363,878	4,876,012	90,900,048
Council Capital	64,637,991	81,461,435		146,099,426
ODSL	31,278,981	6,437,290		37,716,271
ODSTL	6,700,245	8,044,913		14,745,158
OCHL	11,842,481	427,240		12,269,721
Total	152,119,857	144,734,755	4,876,012	301,730,624
Notes:	Council Revenue – increase in part from Temporary Accommodation Council Capital – £59.81M intercompany spend is the purchase of properties from the housing company ODSL – Sub-contractor spend increased by £7M year on year OCHL - £7.91M Old Marston Paddock development (Building contract Payments)			

5.2 LOCAL (OX POSTCODE) AND SME (SMALL/MEDIUM ENTERPRISE) SPEND

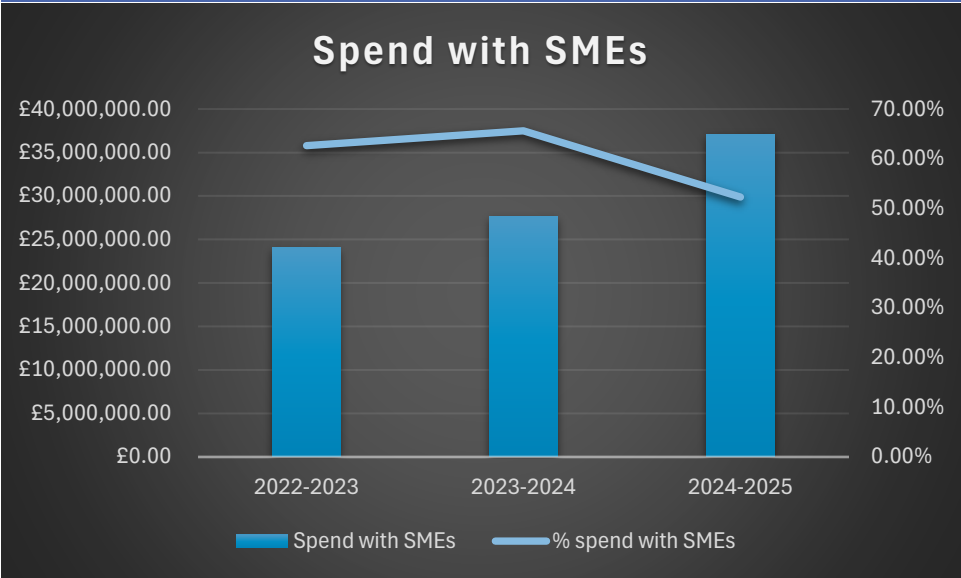
SME Spend

The following charts illustrate the council’s performance on the utilisation of both local and SME suppliers. The Council do not monitor spend with VCSE’s currently. That is in the pipeline for April 2026.

The Council, whilst not required to, has set an annual target of 45% (2024 onwards) of spend to be with SME’s.

A large proportion of the Council spend is with ODSL. ODSL are not classed as an SME although indirectly ODSL may use suppliers classed as SME’s or VCSE’s.

1 [Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis 2025](#)
2 [National Procurement Policy Statement - GOV.UK](#)
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The council has exceeded its SME spend target consistently throughout the last strategic period and continues to do so.

SME spend has increased in 2024 – 2025 although the percentage of spend figure has fallen, mainly due to an increase in payments made to major projects including Hill Residential Limited and Network Rail Infrastructure. These 2 organisations alone represent a £5M increase in non-SME spend for 2024/25 impacting on the SME%

The two suppliers detailed above may use local suppliers (indirect SME spend), but this is not tracked.

An additional £1.5M was spent with Zurich Municipal (non-SME) in 2024-25 compared to previous years further impacting on the SME%

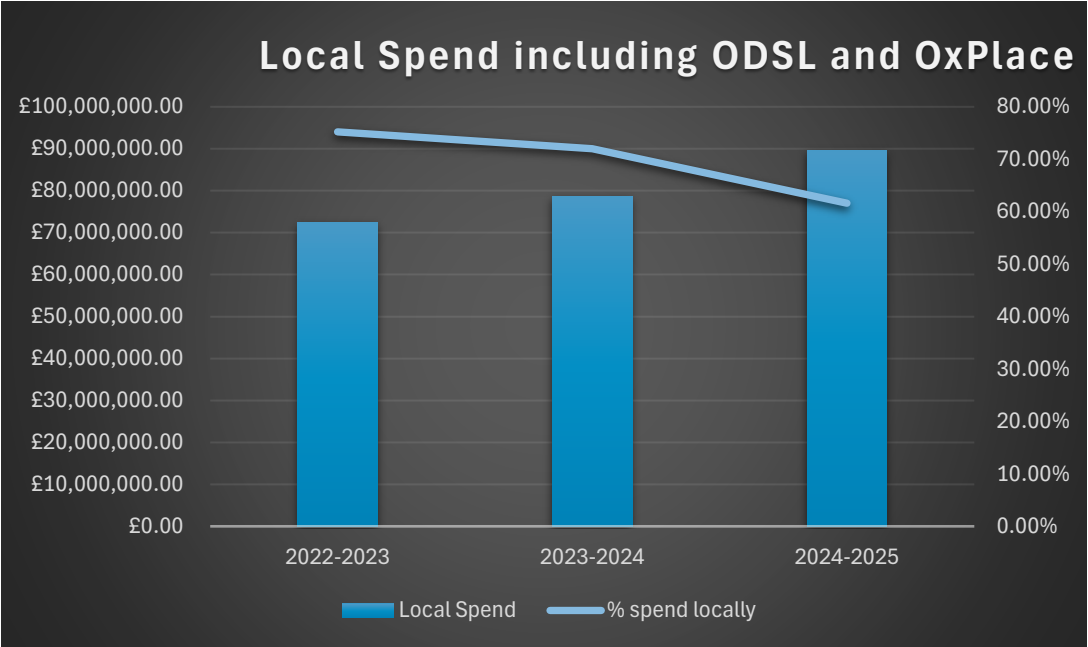
The provision of additional work to ODSL, who are not classed as an SME also impacts on the councils SME spend percentage.

Altogether from the top 15 suppliers by spend £10M more was spent in 2024/25 causing the reduction in the SME % spend.

Local Spend

The Council, whilst not required to, has set an annual target of 70% of spend (2024 onwards) to be with local suppliers (Ox Post code).

The Council as part of the Constitution requires that one quotation should be sought from a local supplier when more than one quotation is necessary for a purchase of goods, works or services.



The councils spend with local suppliers has increased year on year and whilst it is accepted that the % of local spend has reduced, as detailed within the SME spend section the use of large contractors where large payments are being made will impact on the overall percentage.

We do ask that on large contracts a supplier uses local supply chains where possible, however the council does not track this indirect local spend.

Reed Specialist Recruitment and Easy Hotel are local suppliers, but they are not classed as local suppliers due to their registered address not being in Oxford i.e. an OX postcode. In 2024-25 there has been a significant increase in the use of agencies such as Reed. This is just a small example of the impact of the suppliers registered office can have on the percentage of local spend.

The use of Frameworks is increasing, and this has and will have an impact on the use of local suppliers.

5.3 CONTRACT REGISTER_PIPELINE

The Contract register and Pipeline is managed daily by the Procurement team providing visibility to enable effective management and proactive engagement with stakeholders on contracts.

With the commencement of the Procurement Act 2023 (PPA 2023), the procurement team are having to capture and record additional information on the Contract register to enable it to satisfy the requirements of the PPA 2023.

Procurement is required to capture contracts with a value in excess of £30,000 including VAT on the contract register. This value was increased from £10,000 in November 2024 in line with the procurement Act and the Constitution.

August 2025 – Categories of Spend

1 [Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis 2025](#)

2 [National Procurement Policy Statement - GOV.UK](#)

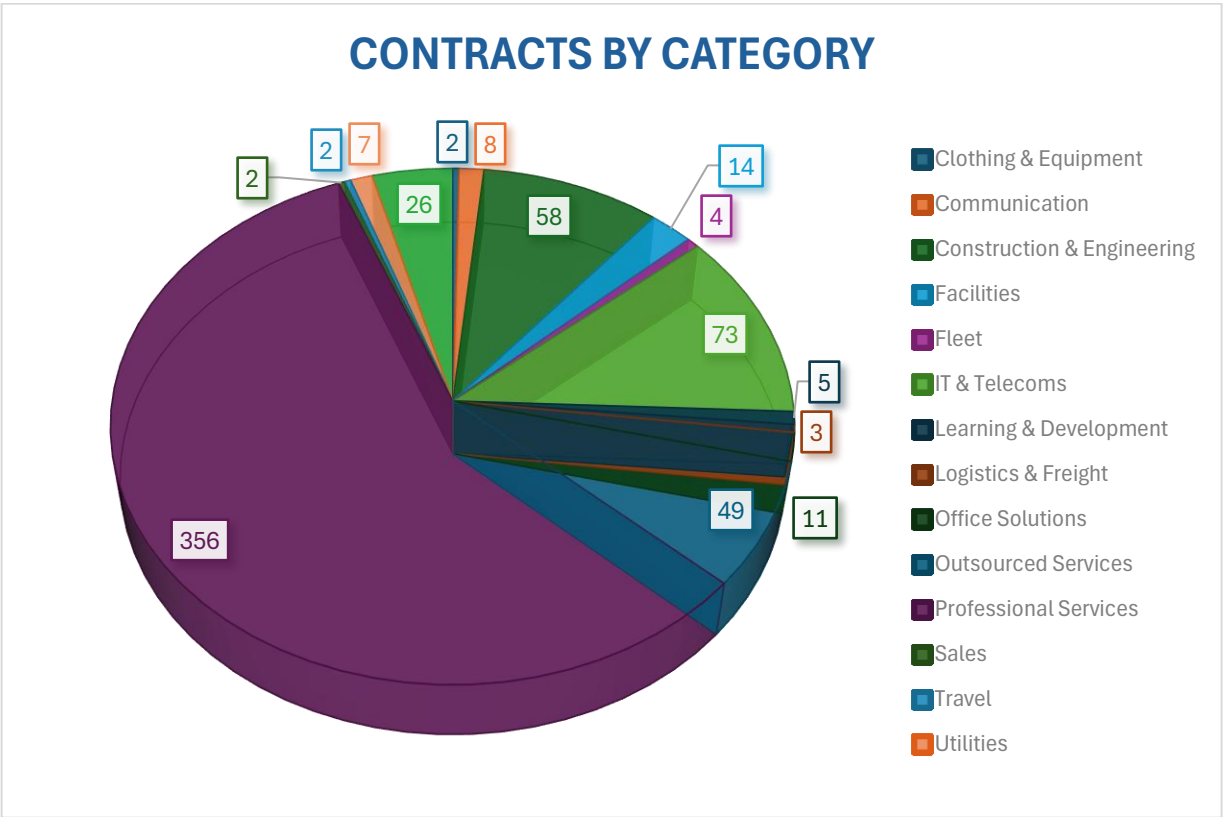
3 [Common Areas of Spend definitions - Procurement](#)

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The high-level Categories (Common Areas of Spend (CAS) ³ used for the Contract Register are those set by the Government. The latest version of CAS has some new Categories that over time the procurement team will incorporate into the register.

As shown in the chart below, Professional Services is the highest category area and includes contracts for application support, Quantity Surveyors and other types of surveyors, survey initiative, engineering frameworks, energy quality assurance. subscriptions, temporary labour, architects, project managers, commercial agents, auditors, valuations and so on. IT and telecoms are the second highest category followed by construction and engineering and outsourced services.

When the team start to look at the updated CAS a number of contracts assigned to professional services will be re-aligned to other categories.



August 2025 Contracts by Service Area

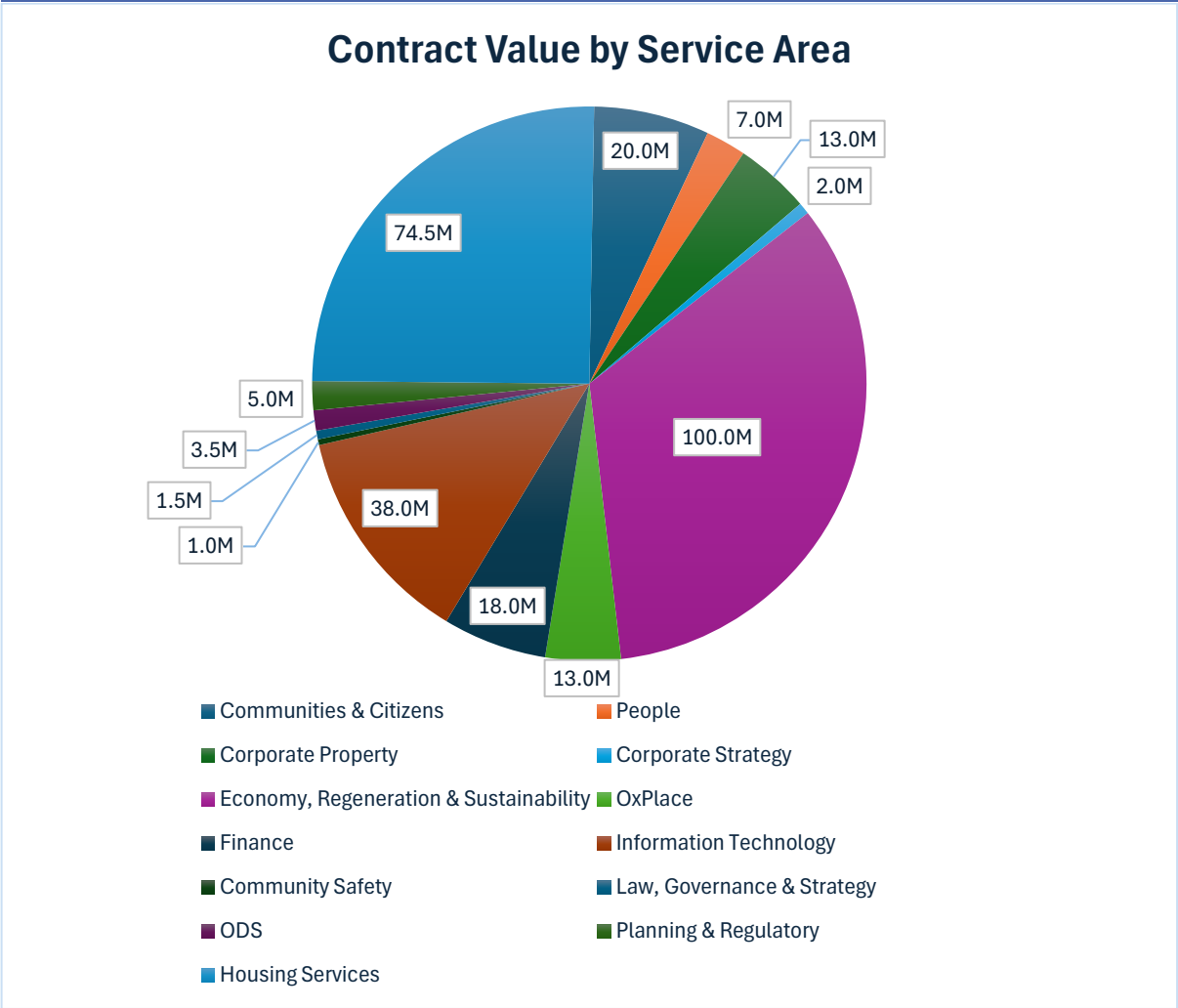
Housing Services has the highest number of live contracts at the Council with 138 followed by corporate property with 89 and OxPlace with 62. This chart does not demonstrate the value of the contracts, purely the number of live contracts at the point of running the report.



August 2025 Contracts by published value by service area

Whilst Housing Services has the highest number of actual contracts followed by Corporate Property and OxPlace, when we look at the published contract value (the initial contract award value), it is Economy, Regeneration & Sustainability that has the highest contract value followed by Housing Services and Information Technology

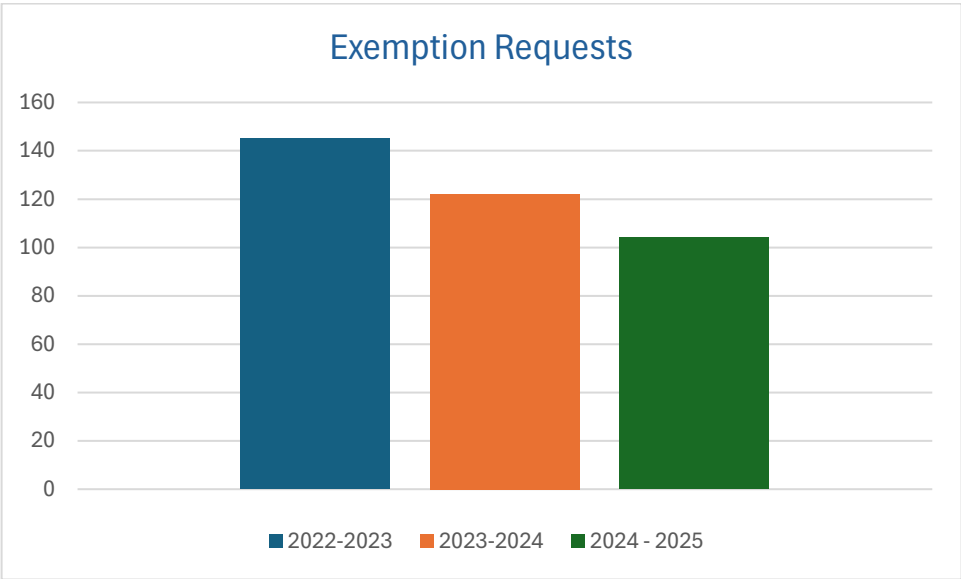
1 [Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis 2025](#)
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5.4 EXEMPTION REQUESTS

Officers are able to request exemptions from following the procurement process in a limited number of instances including emergencies and when no competitive market exists (sole supplier). Such requests require authorisation by the Service Director, Deputy Chief Executive or Cabinet and where such exemptions are in excess of £100,000 in conjunction with Director of Law and Governance& Strategy.

The chart below indicates the number of exemptions over the last 3 years. Procurement have worked with service areas to reduce the number of requests over the years, helping service areas become more pro-active in their contract management in an effort to drive more value for money.



5.5 TENDERS UNDERTAKEN VIA THE PROCUREMENT PORTAL

Procurement monitors the number and type of procurements run on the Procurement Portal. There are competitions undertaken outside of the portal which cannot be tracked due to the devolved nature of the council procurement structure. Those undertaken outside of the portal are generally call offs from a framework utilising the buying organisations systems, or low value below £30,000 where only one quote is required. Following proactive training by the Procurement Team on the use of the corporate procurement portal the number of recorded procurements undertaken via the portal increased in 2024 and to date in 2025 (October 2025) 158 procurements have been run through the portal.

Competition Type	2022	2023	2024	2025 to date
Closed - Invitation only	209	92	231	114
Open Tenders	13	38	30	15
Restricted tenders	2	1	4	1
Unspecified (Framework Mini Comp)	6	72	63	27
Direct Award	0	0	1	1

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Year Total (Jan - Dec)	230	203	329	158
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There continues to be a Regulatory requirement under the Procurement Act 2023 for electronic tendering and within the Constitution it sets out the requirement to administer quotations and tenders through the Councils portal to ensure uniformity of documentation, template terms and conditions and notifications to the required publications such as Find a Tender Service (FTS) (Contract Finder replacement).

The Portal Contract is due to be tendered during the life of this strategy. Once the new contract is awarded, its use will be further rolled out to potentially encompass on-line evaluation and contract management models.

5.6 TRANSPARENCY REPORTING

As well as measuring and monitoring the above performance measures, procurement will publish transparency reports in line with the Procurement Regulations this includes but is not limited to:

- Councils Contract register (a redacted version, providing only required data)
 - [Council contracts | Oxford City Council](#)
- Expenditure Data on items over £500 and Government Procurement Card Transactions. This is a Regulatory requirement as set out in the Local Authorities (Data Transparency) Code 2015, requiring local authorities in England to publish information relating to expenditure over £500
 - [Our spending data | Oxford City Council](#)
- Under the new Procurement Act 2023 there will be an increase in transparency reporting including, but not limited to:
 - Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for all contracts above £5M
 - Publishing contracts (redacted sensitive data) for all contracts above £5M
 - Payment Compliance Notice (which is likely to replace the payment chart below)
 - Payment Notices for payments over £30,000
 - 17 Procurement Notices ranging from a pipeline notice (expected value of contracts exceeding £2M) to Termination notices even for contracts with a natural expiration date.
- Procurement engages with the payments team to publish the Percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days of receipt.

	2022_23	2023_24	2024_25
Paid within 30 days of receipt	76,787	71,301	66,845
Total no of invoices	85,682	95,945	83,100
Percentage paid within 30 days	89.62	74.31	80.44

- The council is tracking below its target of 95%. The procurement and payment team are working with finance to increase Agresso and procure to pay training.
- Issues identified within this area are failure to complete Goods Receipting (GRN), not setting out of office notifications (causes delays), invoices sent outside of the system not being sent to the payments team in a timely manner, purchase orders not being raised prior to invoice receipt, notification of invoice disputes and officers not acting promptly.

6. CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

The process of managing agreements from their creation through to their execution by the chosen party, and to the eventual termination of the contract.

With the Procurement Act in force, the level of required transparency and a need to effectively manage and monitor contractual performance (managing time, maximising value, mitigating risk, fostering strong supplier relationships), training in contract management for around 75 buyers across the Council was fulfilled between September and December 2024.

It is the intention of the procurement team to undertake further contract management training for all new potential buyers into the Council by running a monthly training course. This will include refresher training for those that need it.

Procurement has a number of tools to support the contract management lifecycle which will be continuously reviewed and updated, but includes

- Effectively defining the contract’s purpose, deliverables and performance expectation
- Evaluation and Selection training
- Work with legal to support proper contract drafting
- Effective use of Key Performance Indicators and Service Levels.
- Risk management tools
- Ensuring that contracts are reviewed and or renewed or terminated in a timely manner using the contract register and pipeline.

With the introduction of the Business Partnering Model, the procurement team will provide more hands-on support to service areas as and when required.

7. SOCIAL VALUE

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 which came into force on 31st January 2013 applies when a procuring authority in England procures the provision of services, or the provision of services together with the purchase or hire of goods or carrying out of works, that was subject to Part 2 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Under the Procurement Act 2023, primarily within the National Procurement Policy Statement there is a requirement on commissioners to consider the economic, environmental and social benefits of their approaches to procurement.

Social value can be defined as the additional benefit to the community from a procurement process over and above the direct purchasing of services and or works.

Adopting social value, economic and environmental factors alongside the typical price and quality considerations into procurement processes and procedures, increase the potential for sustainability in a contract.

The Council requires quotes and tenders to include a minimum 10% social value weighting where proportionate and relevant. Where a supplier proposes to deliver social value as part of a contract, the Council must ensure those commitments are adhered to using suitable KPIs. Procurement will work with commissioning officers and contract managers throughout the procurement lifecycle to incorporate social value completely in the process. In

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3 [Common Areas of Spend definitions - Procurement](#)

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the last 3 years of the previous procurement strategy there had been success, but monitoring and measuring of results has been difficult. In this new strategic period, procurement intends to further increase the commitment and monitoring of social value by the following

- **Continued Support of the Oxford Living Wage**
 - The Council incorporates the Oxford Living Wage or National Living Wage Foundation rate into its standard template documents ensuring that local suppliers pay a fair wage to employees. The Council cannot legally enforce this; however, it is taken into consideration when reviewing the tenderers submitted costs.
- **Using the Procurement Business Partners to help record deliverables against social value contractual commitments**
 - Business Partners will support service areas with their contract management and ensure that social value is part of contract management meeting agendas and that the results are logged centrally with procurement.
- **Publication to the internet and intranet by January 2026 of an updated local version of the National TOM’s (a range of social value themes, outcomes and measures aligned with the Councils 5 priorities).**
- **Meet the Buyer event in February 2026**
 - At each Meet the Buyer event the Council offers guidance on Social Value. There will be a social value forum at the 2026 Meet the Buyer event.
- **How to Tender workshops**
 - The procurement team host “How to Tender” workshops to support suppliers in the procurement process. This includes how a local supplier might be able to add value to its bid by the incorporation of social value.
- **Match my Project**
 - For the last year the Council has published within its tender documents a link to a platform called “Match my Project”. The portal use has increased its reach in 2025 to incorporate all of the Oxfordshire Councils.
 - The platform allows communities / schools etc to request support for a project / requirement, and for suppliers to commit to the project/requirement. This means that the social value deliverable is more meaningful and can be tracked.
- **National Procurement Policy Statement**
 - Under the Procurement Act 2023 the Council when procuring above threshold works or services must consider how it can remove barriers to VCSE and SME engagement; how it can encourage local suppliers.
 - Tenders are to be evaluated by MAT (Most Advantageous Tender) which means that cost is not necessarily the prevailing priority for tenders and that Social and environmental considerations can play a more important role.

The Council’s commitment to Community Wealth Building and economic inclusion also recognises the social value inherent in spending money within the local economy and through socially purposeful organisations. The council encourages procuring officers to use legally compliant processes to open tender opportunities for local SMEs, and VCSE organisations (such as reserve contracts and direct awards for lower value contracts) where it is possible to demonstrate that value for money and quality thresholds can be met.

In the period 1st April 2025 to 31st August 2025 there were 97 contracts set up. Only eighteen contracts were above the procurement threshold at which social value is applicable and 4 of these related to products to which social value did not apply. Of the remaining 14 contracts:

Eight were awarded to a local supplier (including ODS) which provides social value as a basic, money spent with those suppliers should be invested back into the local economy.

One contract was under a framework where social value is not always generated.

Five contracts have social value, the value of which is difficult to ascertain.

The opportunity is provided to winning bidders to register with the portal, Match my Project to identify where best they can support the communities in Oxford. Detailed below are the delivered projects to date in 2025

Month	Hours Value*	Resources	Cash Donations	Total Value Monthly
January	£0	£0	£0	£0
February	£0	£0	£0	£0
March	£0	£0	£0	£0
April	£0	£0	£0	£0
May	£0	£0	£0	£0
June	£0	£0	£0	£0
July	£135.44	£200.00	£0	£335.44
August	£0	£0	£0	
September	£592.55	£4900.00	£0	£5492.55
Total	£727.99	£5100.00	£0	£5827.99

- Based on the National TOMs (Theses, Outcomes and Measures) framework values each volunteer hour at £16.93
- As well as the above through the Match my Project portal the following commitments have also been made

- Health and safety training for VCSE’s
- Employment opportunities
- Work placements
- 18 hours supporting unemployed people into work
- Delivering career talks to schools and colleges within Oxford
- Using 100% public transport for face-to-face meetings
- Volunteering allowances to be used to support local initiatives
- Development of waste reduction strategies for projects in Oxford
- Internship/gap year placement
- Work with Aspire
- Job skills training for rehabilitating your offenders
- Donation of Kit
- Sponsorship of sports organisations
- Workplace safari

Social value may also be delivered in sub-threshold procurements for the provision of services and the procurement team has recently updated the contract set up form for all contracts with a value exceeding £30,000 asking the requester to provide information to the procurement team in terms of whether social value is included. It is hoped that this will provide greater visibility moving forward.

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This is still a manual area of data collection and reliant on the individual contract managers, managing their contracts effectively to ensure that the social value commitments are delivered.

8. SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT

Sustainable procurement is the act of adopting social, economic and environmental factors alongside the usual price and quality consideration by the organisation handling the procurement process and procedures. The approach seeks to ensure that the organisation meets their need for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generation benefits not only to the organisation but also to society and the economy whilst minimising damage to the environment.

A sustainable Procurement Guide has been developed with the Sustainability team which incorporates what sustainable procurement is, why it matters, consideration in the procurement process, a checklist of considerations and how to manage sustainability post award of Contract. The Council also has a Carbon and Environmental Considerations in Projects and Programmes guidance for Project Designers.

For all procurements with an estimated contract value in excess of £5m it is recommended that we incorporate within the tender documents a range of questions related to carbon reduction including.

- Carbon reduction plan
- Steps being taken to reduce GHG Emissions
- Net zero target date
- Emission declaration.

With the Council's drive towards a zero carbon Oxford this should also be considered in contracts with a lower value where relevant.

9. ETHICAL PROCUREMENT

Ethical procurement refers to the consideration of a wide range of issues relating to the ethical and sustainability goals of an organisation. It ensures that suppliers and the organisations in their supply chains are monitored on a regular basis to assess whether workers' rights and labour conditions conform to the International Labour Organisation core conventions. Ethical procurement should ensure that there is no disadvantage to those working or living on or near a supply site and that the price paid for the product/service or works reflects a fair and equitable market value.

The Government under the Procurement Act 2023 has developed a Central Digital Platform to enable it to register excluded or excludable suppliers. If a supplier is excluded for any reason, which could include illegal supply chain practices, bribery, coercion and intimidation, extortion etc, the Council must not use that supplier. If the supplier is excludable then the Council must assess the risk of using that supplier before making its final decision.

The Council has an [EDI Strategy](#) which provides a framework for buyers to consider how its supply chain initiatives meet equality criteria as enshrined in the Equality Act 2010 and the Oxford City Council EDI Strategy.

Buyers need to undertake an equality impact assessment as part of the procurement process and procurement support the EDI policy by including it in template tender documents:

Modern Slavery Act 2015

The modern slavery regulations came into force on 29 October 2015. The Modern Slavery Act requires businesses in the UK to prepare a slavery and human trafficking statement for each financial year. The requirement to prepare a slavery and human trafficking statement applies to commercial organisations with an annual turnover – or group turnover - of at least £36 million. Organisations have to be transparent about what they are doing to tackle modern slavery, not just within their own operations, but in their supply chains as well.

The Council supports the Act by ensuring that suppliers tendering for contracts disclose whether the Modern Slavery Act 2015 is applicable in terms of compliance with annual reporting. If applicable, Modern Slavery statements are checked and logged on the contracts register.

Fair Tax

The Council has signed up to Fair Tax Principles. While there are limits to our power, we will do what we can and will also support the Fair Tax Foundation to lobby for more powers around procurement. At the moment we can exclude suppliers who have been proven to have had tax offences, but we are prevented from specifying 'responsible tax' as a contract award criterion, e.g., a policy shunning the artificial use of tax havens, as 'tax' cannot be linked straightforwardly to the subject matter of a contract.

Signing up to the fair tax principles means that we support the proper accounting for and payment of tax and specifically for:

- Ensuring IR35 is implemented robustly, and a fair share of employment taxes are paid by contractors.
- Shunning the use of offshore vehicles for the purchase of land and property, especially where this leads to reduced payments of stamp duty.
- Undertaking due diligence to ensure that not-for-profit structures are not being used inappropriately by suppliers as an artificial device to reduce the payment of tax and business rates.
- Demanding clarity on the ultimate beneficial ownership of suppliers, be they UK based or overseas, and their group consolidated profit and loss position, given lack of clarity could be strong indicators of poor financial probity and weak financial standing.

We have included a question into the selection phase of a tender to enable it to ascertain whether there is a concern prior to awarding an in-scope contract (above threshold).

Safeguarding

Within the standard template tender documents, the Council requests that bidders confirm that they have a safeguarding policy and that they adhere to the requirements set out by various safeguarding boards, that they have a whistleblowing policy and employ staff in line with Safer Recruitment Practices.

Oxford Living Wage

Within the standard template tender documents, the council seeks to promote and increase the number of suppliers that adopt the Living Wage Foundation rate or where the work is undertaken in Oxford, seek to understand whether a bidder currently pays or can commit to pay its employees the Oxford Living Wage.

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Central Digital Platform

Bidders, their associated persons, or connected persons must disclose within their tender submission whether they are an excluded or excludable supplier. The Procurement team can check the bidder’s statement against the excludable supplier list held on the Central Digital Platform. Grounds for exclusion include

- Convictions for offences including (although not limited to): bribery, blackmail, organised crime, fraud, robbery, terrorism, money laundering, modern slavery, corporate manslaughter, corporate homicide, labour market offences and tax-related offences;
- Been found by the CMA or another regulator to have participated in a cartel;
- Been deemed a threat to national security
- Failed to provide information requested by the authority

These exclusion criteria apply to offences and misconduct committed both in the UK and abroad.

There are further grounds for discretionary exclusion covering

- Bankruptcy, insolvency, or equivalent situations;
- Convictions relating to significant actual or potential environmental impacts;
- Professional misconduct, dishonesty, and impropriety;
- Potential competition infringements;
- Serious labour misconduct, even without conviction;
- Poor performance on a previous contract or breach of a previous contract that was not remedied after the opportunity was given to do so;
- Poor performance on a previous contract that led to contract termination and/or damages to have been awarded or a settlement to have been reached;
- Instances where a supplier acts improperly in a procurement, thereby putting itself at an unfair advantage;
- Instances where the supplier poses a risk to national security.

Payment in Contracts (where appropriate)

For certain contracts questions are set in the tender templates relating to a bidder’s performance in paying its supply chain promptly and effectively within the agreed contractual terms.

Skills and Apprentices (where appropriate)

For certain contracts bidders will be asked if they will be supporting apprenticeships and skills developments through the contract and to explain how it will develop and maintain skills relevant to the contract.

The Council commits in this strategy to consider adopting an ethical code of conduct for the purposes of contracts such as the Ethical Trading Initiatives base code.

10. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

With inadequate funding to meet constantly escalating demands on services, it is more important than ever to get the most possible value out of every pound spent. This is particularly the case when it comes to the procurement and management of a council’s contracts with third parties.

When you consider that local government spent over £80bn with suppliers in the last financial year, Councils should explore how they can unlock the strategic value of procurement, especially in light of the new flexibilities introduced by the 2023 Procurement Act. It argues that procurement should move beyond compliance and be seen as a tool for delivering better outcomes for communities through better contract management, and a cultural shift to treat procurement as a strategic enabler rather than a transactional process.

Procurement at Oxford City has evolved over the last 5 years taking the procurement register from a difficult to manage excel spreadsheet to a manageable SharePoint tool enabling procurement to effectively engage with internal and external stakeholders in the timely management of their contracts, more recently with the introduction of the Business Partnering model, and the addition of information within the contract register to enable implementation and management of the new transparency requirements of the Procurement Act 2023.

This has resulted in a reduction in the level of exemptions being requested year on year, and an increase in the number of competitions undertaken through the procurement portal.

Procurement is now represented early in projects by the formation of the Procurement Board in 2024 which meets monthly, by attendance at Front Door of Change meetings and input into forms that require completion for Development Board – asking for more clarity on Procurement route / options and timescale.

Procurement must review the current procurement portal and the option to integrate the procurement Portal with the Procure to Pay system to enable transparency reporting, support KPI monitoring, contract management, and on-time publication of required notices. This will be included as part of the specification for the re- procurement of both systems during this strategic period.

Procurement needs to remain agile and needs to consistently evolve to deal with external changes, further updates to the Procurement Act, the Local Government Reorganisation, increased transparency requirements and a forward-thinking Council that wants to deliver for its people.

11. GLOSSARY

CWB	Community Wealth Building – a people centred approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy
FTS	Find a Tender Service – Noticing section of the Central Digital Platform for high value UK notices for publication of new procurements
H & S	Health & Safety

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KPI's	Key Performance Indicators a quantifiable measure used to evaluate the success of Suppliers in meeting service level objectives
NPPS	National Procurement Policy Statement which the Council must give regard to for all above threshold procurements
PPA 2023	Procurement Act 2023 which came into force on 24 th February 2025.
SLA's	Service Level Agreements – level of service expected by a customer from a supplier
SME	Small and Medium sized Enterprises defined by number of employees and turnover
SV	Social Value – measures the positive value businesses create for the economy, communities and society
SV Weighting	The percentage weighting applied in the evaluation stage of a tender process.
VCSE	Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise – a non-governmental organisation, which principally reinvests its surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives.

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APPENDIX 1

HOW PROCUREMENT WILL SUPPORT INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Procurement will support all new employees to the Council and its entities by delivering a range of training courses (the courses are also available as a refresher for existing employees). The courses include, but are not limited to:

- Procurement overview incorporating the external Regulations and the internal rules (the Constitution);
- Procure to Pay – Training of the Councils financial management system, Agresso ;
- Procurement Portal training;
- Evaluation training
- Contract management training

Procurement Business Partners will attend service area meetings to support and offer guidance in the planning process where new contracts / contract extensions may be required.

As part of its Service Level Agreement to internal stakeholders and to ensure compliance with Regulatory requirements, Procurement will continue to:

- Monitor SME and Local spend;
- Respond to requests for new supplier set up within 7 days (in conjunction with the payment team);
- Publish transparency reports in-line with the transparency requirements on the Council website;
- Respond to emails sent to procurement@oxford.gov.uk within 3 days
- Run tender processes within Regulation guidelines;
- Adhere to agreed service levels with both ODSL and OCHL as agreed from time to time.

A range of templates to support the contract lifecycle will continue to be updated and available.

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

To support internal stakeholders in the management of the Council contracts procurement have produced a number of guides and assessments. All documents can be found on the Intranet

- A contract management guidance document detailing the Contract Manager Obligations.
- A selection of contract management KPI's and SLA's.

Procurement will continually review and update the documents in line with external Regulations and internal rules and will work with service areas to ensure that contract managers understand the requirements from both the buyer and supplier perspective.

All Guidance documents and templates can be found at [How do I?](#)

Contract Management must be embedded in a more holistic way across the Council and commercial knowledge of both the buyer and seller side understood if the Council is to improve its reputation as a good customer to do business with. This will increase the number of suppliers that wish to tender for Council opportunities which will ultimately result in better value for money (cost and quality).

The Procurement Team have developed a contract Management Guide for Managers (Found on the intranet [Contract Handover.docx](#)). Procurement will support and train if required commissioning and contract managers throughout the procurement process but more specifically in ensuring that the contract delivers over and above what is expected by following the Contract Lifecycle Management including

1. Request or initiation (new or review an existing contract)
2. Contract creation & authoring (assemble a contract using existing and approved templates – self service capability)
3. Contract negotiation & Review (version control & audit trail)
4. Contract approval & execution (correct approval, signing & sealing)
5. Contract performance and analytics (milestones, obligations, payments, rebates, discounts) tracking, assigning and completing is critical to achieving the full value from the contract.
6. Contract amendment (part of the contract lifecycle whether we like it or not) dealt with efficiently without compromising the process or the guidelines in place
7. Contract expiry or renewal (using the procurement contract register/pipeline)

Procurement will keep up to date with relevant training available and will encourage commissioning officers and contract managers within the authority to access external training courses available on the subject such as the Contract Management Foundation course on offer from the Government Commercial College [Foundation \(govcommercialcollege.co.uk\)](http://govcommercialcollege.co.uk)

Under the new Procurement Act 2023 the Council has an obligation to publish up to 17 notices throughout the lifetime of a procurement project (pre procurement, during the procurement, post procurement during the delivery stage and at the end of the contract). Contract management is a critical role in ensuring that the contract delivers what it was procured to deliver and enables procurement to adhere to the requirements of the procurement Regulations. Contract Management must be embedded as a culture within the Council.

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Priority	Actions to Achieve	Timeline	Lead Procurement Officer
Social Value and Climate Change	Finalise new version of a social value template developed with other local authorities, universities and groups across Oxfordshire.	January 2026	Strategic Procurement Manager
	Brief all Service Areas	January 2026	Procurement Business Partners
	Improve Contract management, monitoring and reporting of Social Value	In force now and on-going	Strategic Procurement Manager
Deliver the procurement Portal	Extend Contract	Autumn 2025	Procurement Business Partner
	Re-tender	Autumn 2026	Procurement Business Partner
	Train all Buyers	Spring /Summer 2027	Procurement Business Partner
	Transfer Data from incumbent provider to New Provider	Spring/Summer 2026	Procurement Business Partner
Collaborative procurement	How to tender workshops	In force now and on-going	Procurement Business Partner
	Meet the buyer	February 2026, then yearly	Strategic Procurement Manager
	Working with company entities	In Force Now and on-going	Strategic Procurement Manager
	Industry days	When required	Procurement Business Partner
	Working with Social Enterprise Companies	In Force Now and on-going	Strategic Procurement Manager
Constitution Review	Continuous review on a yearly basis	Complete 2025 – review 2026	Strategic Procurement Manager
Procurement template review	Continuous review	Complete February 2025 – constant review Addition of “Proscribed Activities” into the Conditions of Participation	Strategic Procurement Manager
Procurement Training	Procurement Overview	Delivered monthly from November 2025	Procurement Business Partner
	Agresso	Delivered monthly	Procurement Officer
	Portal training	Delivered monthly or when required	Procurement Officer
Commercial Focus	Sell our services	When opportunities arise	Strategic Procurement Manager
	Manage the EV DPS	On-going	Strategic Procurement Manager
Contract Management	Basic contract management training	January 2026 then monthly	Procurement Business Partner
Spend Data	Analysis of Tail end spend (Maverick / Rogue spend)	Initial review by February 2026 then yearly	Procurement Support Officer
Audit	Audit of below threshold spend	To commence January 2026 then quarterly.	Procurement Support Officer
Intranet	Review of the intranet site	In-force – on-going	Strategic Procurement Manager
Terms and Conditions	Addition of” Proscribed Activities” – ability to terminate the Contract	31 st March 2026	Strategic Procurement Manger with Legal Services
Reports	Create a report to identify spend with VCSE’s	Started October 2025	Procurement Officer
	Review fields within Agresso to identify whether we will be able to extract FTS contract numbers into spend reports.	Started October 2025	Procurement Officer
	Review the National Procurement Strategy Toolkit to identify areas for development	January – December 2026	Strategic Procurement Manager

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Table 1: Oxford City Council Procurement Rules (Constitution Section 19)

Value including VAT	Type	Quotes or Tendering	Process Led by
Up to £29,999.99	Goods Works Services Concession	Minimum 1 quote in writing (local supplier if possible) or Use of an approved Framework	Officer authorised by the relevant Service Director
£30,000.00 and over up to FTS	Goods Services	Minimum of 3 written quotes (one from a local supplier if possible). 6 recommended as best practice or Use of an approved Framework	Officer authorised by the relevant Service Director
£30,000.00 and over up to £999,999.99	Works Concession	Minimum 4 written quotes or Use of an approved Framework. Full tender process recommended as best practice.	Officer authorised by the relevant Service Director
Over FTS	Goods Services	Tender process in compliance with legal requirements undertaken via the Procurement Portal or Use of an approved legally compliant Framework or Dynamic Market	Authorised Procurement Practitioner or Procurement Team.
£1M and over up to FTS	Works Concession	Minimum 6 written quotes. A full tender process is recommended as best practice or Use of an approved legally compliant Framework of Dynamic Market	Authorised Procurement Practitioner or Procurement Team.
Over FTS	Works Concession	Tender process in compliance with legal requirements undertaken via the Procurement Portal or Use of an approved legally compliant Framework or Dynamic Market	Authorised Procurement Practitioner or Procurement Team.

Table 2: Current Procurement Act Thresholds

Type of Contract	Thresholds (Including VAT); 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2025
Works and Concession Contracts	£5,372,609.00
Goods and Services Contracts	£214,904.00
Light Touch	£663,540.00

APPENDIX 4 EXAMPLE SCORING MECHANISM

Conditions of Participation

Suppliers can be excluded on the following grounds

Section	Assessment
Exclusion Information	Pass/Fail
Financial Capacity	Pass/Fail
Insurance	Pass/Fail
Legal Capacity	Pass/Fail
Relevant Experience	Information only or Pass/Fail
Sub-Contractor Management	Information only or Pass/Fail
Organisational Standards	Pass/Fail
Health & Safety	Pass/Fail
Tackling Modern Slavery	Pass/Fail
Oxford Living Wage	Information Only
Safeguarding	Pass/Fail
Payment in Contracts	Information only or Pass/Fail
Carbon Reduction	Information only or Pass/Fail
Skills & Apprentices	Information only or Pass/Fail

Bidders who successfully pass the conditions of participation will then be scored under the award criteria.

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Example headings for the Award Criteria	Weighting
Technical Capacity	XX%
Understanding of the brief including program of works	XX%
Method Statements	XX%
Environmental and or Energy Management	XX%
Innovation and or Added Value	XX%
Social Value	10%
Price	XX%

ICT requirements including Cyber Security and GDPR are linked documents to be included as and when appropriate

The weighting is project based and is based on determining the Most Advantageous Tender (MAT)

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