WITNEY
TOWN COUNCIL

Procurement Policy

Adopted: Policy, Governance & Finance Committee. Minute no: F161
Review Date: 30.06.2026* (see Page 4)

1. Background

Procurement refers to the process by which the Council awards and manages contracts to acquire goods, works and services from third parties. It covers the purchase of everything from stationery to the construction of a new building.

Procurement is a complex function governed and guided by many statutes and policies. A comprehensive Procurement Policy is critical to ensuring that all stakeholders involved in procurement follow the proper procedures and rules, and that there is a clear and consistent understanding of the regulations and organisational approach in relation to procurement.

Every contract by the Council or a person acting on its behalf shall comply with relevant legislation, this Procurement Policy, the Council's Standing Orders and its Financial Regulations.

The Council's key objective in procurement is to obtain best value for the goods, materials and services that it purchases. Best Value is defined as a balance of price, quality of the product and of the service and is a key requirement of the procurement process. The Council is also required to achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its procurement.

Prior to commencing a procurement, the person leading the procurement must identify and assess the options for meeting these requirements and prepare a detailed specification. The following matters shall be taken into consideration:

- Aggregating purchases where possible in order to achieve the best price.
- The life cycle of the product supplied and the on-going maintenance costs.
- Sustainable procurement and local procurement. The Council aims to ensure its impact is positive, adding social value by contributing to the long-term wellbeing and resilience of residents, the community and society in general, balancing this with financial regulations and statutory legislation.

The Council operates a transparent procurement process in accordance with its Financial Regulations and Standing Orders.

2. Related policies

Every contract made by or on behalf of the Council shall comply with:

- This policy.
- The Council's Financial Regulations, in particular section 5 – Procurement.
- The Council's Standing Orders, in particular Standing Order 32 – Financial Controls

and Procurement.

- The Council's Climate Emergency declaration to be carbon neutral by 2028 as declared on 26 June 2019.
- All relevant statutory provisions including but not limited to the Local Government Act 1972 s.135, Local Government Act 1988 Part II, the Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997, Local Government Act 1999, Local Government Act 2000 and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Procurement Act 2023.

3. Sustainable procurement

a. The Council recognises the importance of sustainability and will consider the environmental, social and economic impacts of its purchasing decisions.

b. The Council recognises that it is good practice to consider social value for all contracts and will seek to mitigate any negative impacts of its operations and enhance those that could be beneficial in the hope of leaving a positive social legacy.

c. The Council recognises its duty to protect biodiversity under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. To meet this duty the Council will wherever possible purchase products or specify working methods that protect biodiversity.

d. The Council will further encourage suppliers to adopt practices which minimize their environmental impact and deliver community benefits in relation to their operations and supply chains.

e. The Council will, wherever relevant, purchase goods that meet Fairtrade standards (or similar).

Local contractors, community benefits and equalities

f. The Council recognises the benefits to the economy of using SME (micro, small and medium-sized enterprises) businesses, VCSEs (non-governmental organisations that are value-driven and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives) and the voluntary sector. The Council will also seek out local contractors and suppliers wherever possible.

g. The Council will look positively on suppliers who deliver community benefits and raise living standards by promoting employment through job creation, facilitating apprenticeship opportunities, and paying the real living wage, as it does to its employees.

h. All procurement will be in accordance with the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Competence of contractors and due diligence

i. The Council shall only enter into a contract with a supplier if it is satisfied as to the

supplier's suitability, eligibility, financial standing and technical capacity to undertake the contract by conducting appropriate due diligence.

j. All contractors and suppliers working on Council sites will be required to comply with the Council's Health & Safety policy and any rules specific to the site of operation.

k. Provision of suitable risk assessments and method statements may be a condition of contracts involving work on Council properties or sites.

l. The Council requires all contractors to maintain adequate insurance, including but not limited to Public Liability insurance and Employers' Liability Insurance of £10,000,000. This level may be varied by the officer commissioning the work, taking into account all factors including the nature of the contract, the value of the contract and the risks to the Council. The Council may also require Professional Indemnity insurance at a level commensurate with the value of the contract.

Community engagement

m. Where relevant the Council will consult with residents and service users to better understand what is needed, who will use it and what the essential requirements are for an item of capital expenditure. Examples of when this may apply, depending on circumstances, include provision of new play equipment, bus shelters, benches and bins

Selection criteria

n. In addition to the above requirements the following factors may also be considered in the Council's selection process:

- Credit checks.
- Health and safety record.
- Health and safety procedures.
- Financial accounts.
- References from customers.
- Location of supplier.
- Organisational structure and staffing levels.
- Policies in relation to the environment/ sustainability and equality and diversity.
- Any other factors which the Council considers relevant in relation to the procurement.

Procurement procedures

o. All contracts over £25,000 (excluding VAT) will be advertised on the Council's website and the Contracts Finder website (or equivalent) subject to the exemptions

to this requirement detailed in the Financial Regulations paragraph 5.12.

p. In accordance with Financial Regulation 5.14 the Council is not obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quotation or estimate.

q. The Council maintains monthly accounts with suppliers from which it makes regular purchases. All purchases on Council accounts may only be made by authorised Council officers who must either provide a purchase order or be provided with a receipt. Limits are set on each account on the maximum value of individual purchases and the overall balance on the account. Expenditure over these limits must be authorised by the Town Clerk/ Chief Executive in advance.

r. The Council understands the importance of paying suppliers promptly and will wherever possible settle undisputed accounts within a maximum of 30 days from receipt, or earlier, by agreement.

Additional guidance

s. Where additional guidance is needed the following documents should be referred to:

- Practitioners Guide 2026/27 (Jointly published by the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel with the National Association of Local Councils, the Society of Local Council Clerks and the Association of Drainage Authorities), 24 March 2026.
- NALC Advice Note - Procurement – 3 February 2026.

Advice can also be obtained from the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils.

Review

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Council's Policy, Governance & Finance Committee every 2 years, or in response to changes in legislation. However, on this occasion the RFO intends to issue an expanded Procurement handbook, including both policy and procedures and therefore the next scheduled review date is 30 September 2026.

APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

ESTIMATED VALUE OF CONTRACT (Net of Vat)	**CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS**
Between £500 and £3,000	3 estimates required. A purchase order is required.
Between £3,001 and £24,999	3 quotations required. A purchase order is required.
Between £25,000 and Procurement threshold*	Tender advertised on the Town Council website, Contracts Finder/ Find a Tender website, and specialist websites if appropriate. A contract is required.
Above Procurement threshold	Legal advice shall be obtained on the most appropriate processes, if necessary. A contract is required.

*Procurement thresholds are set, usually annually by central government in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

These requirements are subject to the exemptions outlined in Financial Regulation 5.12.