

Procurement in councils

Self-assessment checklist for councillors



Audit Scotland published its national report, [Procurement in councils \(PDF\)](#) , on 24 April 2014. This paper accompanies that report and sets out some issues that elected council members may wish to consider in relation to procurement in their own council. Elected council members should assess themselves against each statement and identify what actions need to be taken forward. They may wish to apply this checklist annually to review progress.

Copies of the national report can be downloaded from our website www.audit-scotland.gov.uk .

Questions for elected council members to consider	Assessment	Required actions
Context and the crucial role of councillors		
Is there a committee with specific responsibility for procurement in the council?		
Am I clear about the principles of good procurement and my role in monitoring the council's procurement practices?		
Do I have a good understanding of the changing procurement environment, including legislative changes and policy developments?		
Do I have access to, and take-up, appropriate procurement training and development opportunities?		

Questions for elected council members to consider	Assessment	Required actions
The council's procurement goals and objectives		
Do I have a good understanding of the council's procurement strategies and improvement plans?		
Do the council's procurement strategies (and improvement plans) clearly link to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the council's overall goals? • wider procurement reforms? 		
Does the council effectively use its procurement resources, including people and information technology, to meet its objectives?		
Approving contracts		
When approving contracts, do I have assurance that the council has carried out the following (or clearly indicated when it is not relevant to do so):		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engaged early on with suppliers and the people who use public services to help develop contract specifications that more accurately reflect service user requirements and allow for greater innovation within contracts, for example in social care contracts? • assessed and clearly set out the financial and non-financial benefits including community and environmental benefits to be secured from the contract? • put in place the systems to measure whether the intended non-financial benefits are realised? 		
Am I confident that my council carries out sufficient supplier development activities with suppliers including local companies, SMEs and third sector organisations?		

Questions for elected council members to consider	Assessment	Required actions
Performance management		
<p>Does the committee with a remit for procurement receive regular reports on:</p> <p>(a) procurement spend, including assurance that the council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • makes full use of national and sector collaborative contracts, with clear explanations for non-participation? • is taking action to reduce the volume and value of off-contract spend where appropriate? <p>(b) procurement outcomes including progress against:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the council's own key performance measures for procurement? • annual procurement savings achieved based on robust information and calculations? • savings achieved for key contracts? • non-financial benefits achieved for key contracts, including community and environmental benefits?¹ • Scottish procurement best practice indicators? 		
<p>Does the audit committee receive reports from internal audit covering internal systems for managing fraud and progress against any areas identified for improvement?</p>		
<p>Do I challenge officers on the performance information presented to me where it is unclear or where it indicates poor performance?</p>		
Cont.		

¹ The Scottish Sustainable Procurement Action Plan recommends that organisations carry out initial and periodic self-assessments against the Flexible Framework. This framework enables measurement against various aspects of sustainable procurement and areas for improvement to be identified.

Questions for elected council members to consider	Assessment	Required actions
<p>Do I know how well my council has performed on the procurement capability assessment? Do I receive regular reports to show how my council is progressing against its procurement capability assessment improvement plan?</p>		
<hr/> Promoting and sharing best practice		
<p>Does my council play an active role in procurement networks and national working groups to gather and promote best practice in procurement?</p>		