

# Procurement Strategy & Policy

<b>Date of last approval</b>	January 2026 (effective from 1 February 2026)
<b>Date of next review</b>	Annually – January 2027
<b>Related Legislation/Applicable Section of Legislation</b>	Procurement Act, 2023 (and amendments) Bribery Act, 2010 Public Contract Regulations, 2015 Local Government Act (NI), 1972 EU Directive, 2014/24
<b>Related Policies, Procedures, Guidelines, Standards, Frameworks</b>	MEA Council Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation MEA Procurement and Contract Management Procedures MEA Business Case / Economic Appraisal policies, templates
<b>Policy Lead (Name/Position)</b>	Laureen Donnan Director of Corporate Support Services
<b>Sponsor Directorate</b>	Corporate Support Services
<b>Version</b>	1.0

## Document Control

Version	Date	Revision History	Author	Status
1.0	19.01.2026	Complete revision of strategy and policy to reflect Procurement Act 2023 and changes to MEABC thresholds for quotations and tenders. Supercedes 2022 Policy.	MEA Procurement Unit	Final

# Contents

<b>1. Background, Strategy &amp; Purpose</b> .....	5
1.1    What is Public Procurement? .....	5
1.2    Mission Statement for Mid & East Antrim's Procurement Policy .....	5
1.3    MEA Strategic Procurement Approach .....	5
1.4    Purpose, Application and Scope .....	6
1.5    Guiding Principles of Procurement.....	7
1.6    Managing Public Money .....	8
<b>2. Legislation and Policy</b> .....	9
2.1    Legal Context .....	9
2.1.1    Local Government Act NI (1972) .....	9
2.1.2    The UK Procurement Act 2023 (the 2023 Act) – Regulated Procurement .....	9
2.1.3    UK Public Procurement Regulations – Prior to the Procurement Act 2023.....	9
2.1.4    Public Procurement Notice (PPN) .....	10
2.1.5    EU Directive 2014/24 .....	10
2.1.6    Other Relevant Legislation .....	10
2.2    Procurement Policy Landscape .....	10
2.3    Ethical Procurement and Social Value.....	11
2.3.1    Legislative Context .....	11
2.3.2    Social Value .....	11
2.3.3    Environmental Sustainability .....	12
2.3.4    Ethical Sourcing .....	12
2.3.5    Ethical Procurement.....	13
2.3.6    Buying Local.....	13
<b>3. Procurement in MEA Council</b> .....	13
3.1    MEA Procurement Approach.....	13
3.2    Overview of MEA Procurement Process .....	14
3.2.1 - Step 1: Needs Identification and Planning.....	15
3.2.2 - Step 2 - Request Quotation and Tender .....	16
3.2.3 - Step 3 - Evaluation and Award.....	16
3.2.4 - Step 4 – Contract Management and Closure.....	18
3.3    Roles and Responsibilities .....	19
3.3.1    Members .....	19
3.3.2    Officers .....	20

3.3.3	Central Procurement Unit.....	21
3.4	Related Policies.....	21
3.5	Complaints.....	21
3.6	Document and Information Management .....	22
<b>Appendix 1 - Procurement Thresholds and Approval Limits</b>	.....	23
Table 1 - UK Procurement Thresholds .....	.....	23
Table 2 – MEA Procurement Thresholds .....	.....	24
Table 3 –Delegated Authorities .....	.....	25
<b>Appendix 2 - Abbreviations Commonly used in Procurement / MEA</b>	.....	26

# 1. Background, Strategy & Purpose

## 1.1 What is Public Procurement?

Public procurement is the process by which public authorities purchase goods, works or services from external providers that enable them to deliver the services for which they are responsible. It is the process of the acquisition, usually by means of a contractual arrangement after public competition, of goods, services, works and other supplies by the public service and adopts ‘Best Value for Money’ as the most advantageous combination of cost, quality and sustainability to meet customer requirements.

As such, procurement is a critical function of the Council, and it accounts for a significant proportion of its spending. Given the resource implications, it is essential that procurement activity is well managed to secure the maximum possible value from this expenditure. The overriding procurement policy requirement is that all public procurement must be based on value for money, defined as “**the best mix of quality and effectiveness for the least outlay over the period of use of the goods or services bought.**”

Procurement is also about making choices and the Council’s procurement activity provides a very clear signal of our values and how we want to be seen now and in the future. At a strategic level, aligning procurement decision making to the Council’s broader policy objectives means that our purchasing power can be leveraged to make a positive impact towards those goals, for example to achieve wider economic, environmental, and social benefits.

## 1.2 Mission Statement for Mid & East Antrim’s Procurement Policy

The objective of Mid & East Antrim Council’s procurement activities is to secure the best value for money (VfM) outcome for the ratepayer whilst delivering on the key economic, environmental and social outcomes set out in the [Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Corporate Plan 2024-2028](#)

## 1.3 MEA Strategic Procurement Approach

To address the above, overarching objective the Council’s strategic procurement approach has four key elements, as summarised in the table below:

Strategic Objectives	What this will involve
Achieving Value-for-Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maximising the value of procurement spend.</li><li>• Improving efficiency and effectiveness.</li><li>• Adopting innovative strategies.</li><li>• Utilising e-procurement systems.</li></ul>

Strategic Objectives	What this will involve
Promoting Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building relationships with local businesses to increase participation in public tendering / quotations.</li> <li>• Supporting local jobs and skills.</li> <li>• Encouraging supplier innovation.</li> <li>• Ensuring a resilient supply chain.</li> </ul>
Supporting Social and Environmental objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedding social value: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing secure employment and skills;</li> <li>• Building ethical and resilient supply-chains;</li> <li>• Delivering Climate Action; and</li> <li>• Promoting Wellbeing.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Promoting environmentally positive practices including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the protection and preservation of habitats and species, air quality, land degradation avoidance and supporting sustainable food growing;</li> <li>• Encouraging reuse and use of recycled and sustainable materials;</li> <li>• Climate Action: reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change and building resilience;</li> <li>• Promoting energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy technologies;</li> <li>• Promoting active and sustainable travel and the use of low-carbon fuels in transport; and</li> <li>• Promoting equity, health, and wellbeing.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Compliance, Transparency and Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring compliance with procurement legislation.</li> <li>• Ensuring compliance with the Council's Standing Orders, Scheme of Delegation, Procurement Strategy &amp; Policy and Procedures.</li> <li>• Ensuring transparency in decision-making.</li> <li>• Managing procurement risks.</li> </ul>

## 1.4 Purpose, Application and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to govern the method by which MEA Council procures the goods, works, and services it requires to enable it to deliver its services effectively. This document is designed to assist Council officers in determining the most appropriate method of procurement when purchasing goods, works and services. It details what the Council expects from its officers in terms of behaviour, actions taken and processes to be followed.

This Policy applies to all Council officers involved in the execution of works, supply of products or provision of service contracts, where they are involved in a procurement process, whether as requisitioners, specifiers, purchasers or those who validate or authorise payment. This includes full-time and part-time employees on a substantive or fixed-term contract and associated persons such as agency staff, contractors and secondees. Consultants working on behalf of the Council who are involved in the procurement process must ensure their documentation complies with this Policy.

This Policy **does not** apply to:

- the acquisition or rental, by whatever financial means, of land or existing buildings;
- Certain legal services (for example, legal representation or advice by a lawyer in judicial proceedings before the courts or in situations where there is a high probability that judicial proceedings will result);
- Certain financial services (for example, those in connection with the issue, sale, purchase, or transfer of securities), loans, statutory external audit, National Fraud Initiative.
- Employment contracts;
- Civil defence and danger prevention services that are provided by non-profit organisations;
- Using public transport services;
- Public contracts between public sector entities that satisfy a range of conditions;
- Statutory payments such as TV licensing, LPS rate payments, pension contributions;
- Cost of attending training and development events;
- Cost of study courses; attendance at conferences, exhibitions, seminars and workshops;
- Officers' professional fees required as legal necessity to perform their duties;
- Payments to individuals, such as speaker fees; musician fees; medical reports;
- Internal purchases (including petty cash); and
- Grants.

This Policy is supported by Procurement Procedures that officers must follow as they progress through the procurement process.

## 1.5 Guiding Principles of Procurement

There are 12 guiding principles governing public procurement:

1. **Accountability:** effective mechanisms must be in place in order to enable Officers and their equivalents to discharge their personal responsibility on issues of procurement risk and expenditure.

- 2. Competitive Supply:** procurement should be carried out by competition unless there are convincing reasons to the contrary.
- 3. Consistency:** economic operators should, all other things being equal, be able to expect the same general procurement policy across the public sector.
- 4. Effectiveness:** public bodies should meet the commercial, regulatory and socio-economic goals of local government in a balanced manner appropriate to the procurement requirement.
- 5. Efficiency:** procurement processes should be carried out as cost effectively as possible. Where possible and allowed, collaborative procurement is to be encouraged.
- 6. Fair dealing:** suppliers should be treated fairly and without unfair discrimination, including protection of commercial confidentiality where required. Public bodies should not impose unnecessary burdens or constraints on suppliers or potential suppliers.
- 7. Integration:** the procurement policy should pay due regard to the Council's other economic and social policies, rather than cut across them.
- 8. Integrity:** there should be no corruption or collusion with suppliers or others.
- 9. Informed decision-making:** public bodies need to base decisions on accurate information and to monitor requirements to ensure that they are being met.
- 10. Legality:** public bodies must conform to all legal requirements.
- 11. Responsiveness:** public bodies should endeavour to meet the aspirations, expectations and needs of the community served by the procurement.
- 12. Transparency:** public bodies should ensure that there is openness and clarity on procurement policy and its delivery.

## 1.6 Managing Public Money

[Managing Public Money NI](#) , published by the Department of Finance requires everyone working in public services in Northern Ireland to be aware of the need to manage and deploy public resources responsibly in the public interest. This requirement is clearly very relevant when undertaking procurement activity which must be carried out:

- In the spirit of, as well as to the letter of, the law;
- In the public interest;
- To high ethical standards; and
- To achieve value for money.

## 2. Legislation and Policy

### 2.1 Legal Context

Procurement in local authorities in NI is subject to a number of pieces of legislation. The principal ones are highlighted below.

#### 2.1.1 Local Government Act NI (1972)

To enter contracts for the supply of goods, works and services, local authorities in Northern Ireland are subject to and must adhere to procurement related legislation / rules. The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 states a Council may enter contracts necessary for the discharge of any of its functions. It states that all contracts made by the Council shall be made in accordance with its standing orders and, in the case of contracts for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works, the standing orders shall:

- (a) require that, except as otherwise provided by or under the standing orders, notice of the intention of the council to enter into a contract shall be published and tenders invited; and*
- (b) regulate the manner in which such notice is to be published, and tenders are to be invited.*

#### 2.1.2 The UK Procurement Act 2023 (the 2023 Act) – Regulated Procurement

The 2023 Act reformed existing procurement rules in the UK and came into effect on 24 February 2025. The Act was put in place following the UK withdrawal from the EU. The Act, introduced on February 24, 2025, aims to simplify and modernise the UK's public procurement system. It consolidates existing procurement rules into a single framework, with the goal of creating a more transparent and flexible system that better supports public sector needs and encourages innovation. The Act also seeks to open up procurement to new entrants, particularly small businesses, and social enterprises. A central digital platform, integrated with the [Find a Tender](#) service requires councils to register and share specific supplier information.

A useful summary of the main provisions of the Act can be found here [The Procurement Act 2023: A short guide for senior leaders \(HTML\) - GOV.UK](#). The legislation itself can be found here [Procurement Act 2023](#).

#### 2.1.3 UK Public Procurement Regulations – Prior to the Procurement Act 2023

For procurements prior to 24 February 2025 (the 'go live' date of the 2023 Act), the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR), 2015 rules for procurement and the Concession Contracts Regulations, 2016 apply.

#### 2.1.4 Public Procurement Notice (PPN)

In addition to the Procurement Act 2023, PPN 04/21 was approved by the Northern Ireland Executive on 6 March 2025 amending the procurement control limits applicable to public bodies in Northern Ireland, including a new tender threshold of £50,000 (up from the previous £30,000). Councils are not legally bound by the Procurement Policy Note (PPN) and may set their own thresholds. However, we look to the PPN as a source of best practice and have taken its recommended levels into consideration. Accordingly, the revised tender limit has been adopted within this policy.

#### 2.1.5 EU Directive 2014/24

In addition to the above, EU funded procurement (for example, Peace Plus funded procurement) must comply with EU Directive 2014/24 (subject to any legal advice that may be issued to clarify how the Directive / UK procurement legislation is to be applied).

#### 2.1.6 Other Relevant Legislation

When conducting procurement exercises it is also useful to assess whether the bidders comply with relevant legislation. The types of legislation that are commonly relevant in a procurement exercise are:

- Bribery Act;
- Health and safety regulations;
- Modern Slavery Act;
- Environmental regulations; and
- Employment regulations.

### 2.2 Procurement Policy Landscape

Construction & Procurement Delivery (CPD) is a business area within the Department of Finance (DoF) in the Northern Ireland Civil Service. It is responsible for disseminating advice and guidance on the direction and policies on public procurement. It does this through the production of Procurement Guidance Notes, which are developed in consultation with its public sector stakeholders. Procurement Guidance Notes are available on the CPD Website.

Although the Council is not directly subject to Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy, Council officers are encouraged to use Construction & Procurement Delivery (CPD) best practice procurement guidance to assist them if they are looking for any further guidance when performing procurement exercises, especially if the project is funded through central government. The Council's Procurement Unit can support officers in accessing / applying advice that is relevant to specific procurements / contracts.

## 2.3 Ethical Procurement and Social Value

The Council is committed to responsible and ethical procurement. This encompasses both Social Value and Sustainability and recognises the Council's responsibility to procure value for money goods, services, works and utilities, whilst maximising social value, minimising environmental impacts and ensuring the ethical treatment of people throughout its supply chains.

### 2.3.1 Legislative Context

The Council conducts procurement activity in line with the best practice principles of transparency, non-discrimination, fair treatment, value for money and the public good when conducting procurements of any value.

The Procurement Regulations set out the specific types of qualification, selection and award criteria that may be used to assess bidders to ensure suppliers are treated in a fair and transparent manner. Assessing suppliers on criteria considered as non-commercial is not permitted. Non-commercial considerations could include, for example, a supplier's political affiliation.

### 2.3.2 Social Value

In the context of procurement, social value is about leveraging service and works contracts to protect and enhance the health and wellbeing of local people and the local environment, providing skills and employment opportunities and promoting the local economy.

Social Value includes environmental, economic and societal objectives. Council will maximise social, economic and environmental outcomes through procurement spend and grant funding.

In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Procurement Board agreed a standard approach (the 'Buy Social' Model) to be used in the procurement of construction projects from April 2016. The Buy Social model seeks to maximise the benefits from public procurement in terms of personal well-being, social cohesion and inclusion, equal opportunities and sustainable development.

PPN01/21 - Social Value in procurement outlines the requirements to incorporate Social Value in procurements under the four themes listed below and requires contractor staff to be paid the Real Living Wage for relevant contracts:

- Increasing secure employment and skills;
- Building ethical and resilient supply chains;
- Delivering Climate Action; and
- Promoting Wellbeing.

More information can be found here [PPN 01/21 - Social Value in Procurement |](#)

## Department of Finance.

While not mandated to local government, the Buy Social model is considered good practice and will be considered in the Council's procurement to formally embed social value in procurement processes, policies, corporate strategies and corporate objectives. The Council is committed to ensuring that projects provide the maximum benefit to the borough through adding social value clauses to above threshold Government contracts, allocating a minimum of 10% of the total evaluation award criteria to social value.

### 2.3.3 Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability means responsibly managing Earth's natural resources and ecosystems to meet current human needs without harming the ability of future generations to meet their own, focusing on balancing ecological health with social well-being and economic viability through practices like conserving resources, reducing pollution, using renewable energy, and protecting biodiversity for long-term planetary health.

Minimising environmental impacts, responsibly managing resources and ecosystems and bringing efficiency throughout the supply chains of all goods, services and works procured:

- Sourcing lower impact (e.g. from extraction, processing/manufacturing, transportation, carbon emissions) materials and methods;
- Maximising resource efficiency by considering whole life costs and seeking to reduce waste;
- Encouraging reuse and use of recycle and sustainable materials;
- Protecting and preserving natural habitats and species, preserving air quality and land degradation avoidance;
- Promoting sustainable food, farming, and animal welfare;
- Promoting Climate Action - Mitigation (reducing greenhouse gas emissions):
  - Supporting energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy and renewable energy technologies;
  - Supporting active and sustainable travel and the use of low-carbon fuels in transport;
- Promoting Climate Action - Adaptation:
  - adjusting to current and future impacts of climate change to reduce harm and build resilience, focusing on actions like improving infrastructure for floods and heat, managing water resources, and enhancing natural systems, complementing mitigation efforts (reducing emissions) by managing unavoidable effects; and
- Promoting peace, justice, equity, health and wellbeing.

### 2.3.4 Ethical Sourcing

Ensuring that human rights and employment rights are protected throughout the Council's supply chains and encouraging responsible business practices within the procurement process:

- Ensuring human and labour rights, including compliance with the Modern Slavery Act, 2015;
- Ensuring legal and fair employment practices; and
- Contracting with responsible businesses.

Responsible procurement will be balanced and guided by use of available resources whilst achieving value for money and constantly seeking continuous improvement and will contribute towards the Council Values and Outcomes.

### 2.3.5 Ethical Procurement

Ethics refers to the use of recognised social principles that involve fairness throughout the business relationship and being ethical means following a behaviour perceived as fair by the business community and wider society. Being ethical means treating suppliers in a just, fair, honest and fitting manner; preferential treatment is considered unethical. Council departments are in control of large budgets; hence it is important to set out:

- The legislative context in which we operate;
- The expected behaviours for all officers and how these are built into our processes; and
- What we expect from our suppliers and how we can assess that within our procurement exercises.

### 2.3.6 Buying Local

"Buy local" procurement is the strategy of purchasing goods and services from local suppliers to support the local economy, build community ties, and strengthen supply chains. This can involve the inclusion of specific criteria that prioritise local vendors, i.e., location. The Council will aim to source locally in all our quotation processes. Where it is a viable option, officers should include at least one local company (in the Borough of Mid and East Antrim) in the quotation process. Reports to Committee on procurement processes will highlight the number of responses to procurement exercises received from companies based in the Borough of Mid and East Antrim and the address of the successful company.

## 3. Procurement in MEA Council

### 3.1 MEA Procurement Approach

MEA Council adopts a hybrid approach to procuring, whereby a central Procurement Unit supports staff within directorates with the procurement process. However, *ultimate responsibility for procurement resides with the Council service area where the expenditure is being incurred*. This includes ensuring that the

requisite budget is in place and that the procurement is supported, where required, by a business case or economic appraisal.

Where appropriate, the Council will make use of Government Procurement Frameworks and other relevant frameworks will be explored to support the competitive procurement process. Collaborative procurement opportunities should also be considered where relevant.

For procurement exercises conducted under the 2023 Act, the Council will act in accordance with applicable legislation and have regard to the importance of the following objectives:

- delivering value for money;
- maximising public benefit;
- sharing information for the purpose of allowing suppliers and others to understand the authority's procurement policies and decisions; and
- acting, and being seen to act, with integrity.

In accordance with the 2023 Act, conflicts of interest must be assessed throughout the duration of the contract.

### 3.2 Overview of MEA Procurement Process

Step 1. Needs identification and planning	
<b>Identify the need:</b>	Determine the specific goods, works, or services required to meet organisational needs.
<b>Market research:</b>	Analyse the market. Consult with Procurement Unit for preliminary inclusion in Departmental procurement pipeline.
<b>Approval to proceed:</b>	Complete business case (£50k+) / economic appraisal (£500k+) where required and ensure approved. Ensure budget approved.
<b>Procurement planning:</b>	Develop a detailed plan that includes requirements, evaluation criteria, timelines, and the chosen procurement method.
Step 2. Request quotation or tender	
<b>Issue tender / quotation documents:</b>	Prepare and issue tender / quotation documents that clearly outline the contract's scope, requirements and terms.
<b>Publish the notice (tenders):</b>	Publish the tender notice on a public procurement portal to invite bids from interested suppliers.
<b>Bid submission:</b>	Suppliers submit their bids by the deadline specified in the tender documents.

Step 3. Evaluation and award	
<b>Evaluate bids:</b>	Review and evaluate the submitted bids/quotes based on the predetermined criteria (e.g., price, quality, and capability).
<b>Select:</b>	Complete / sign off moderated evaluation and select preferred supplier.
<b>Award the contract:</b>	Formally award the contract to the winning bidder. Ensure approval / sealing in line with Scheme of Delegation.
<b>Provide feedback:</b>	Inform unsuccessful bidders and provide feedback, which is often a legal requirement.
Step 4. Contract management and closure	
<b>Administer the contract:</b>	Manage the contract's performance, monitor key performance indicators (KPIs), and handle any contract variations.
<b>Monitor and review:</b>	Conduct performance reviews to ensure the supplier is meeting the contract's quality standards and objectives.
<b>Plan for contract end:</b>	If recurring spend, plan next steps to ensure timely procurement and no loss of continuity of supply.
<b>Close the contract:</b>	Ensure all contract obligations have been met, finalise payments, and conduct a "lessons learned" review to inform future procurement.

The policy requirements in relation to each of the above stages of the procurement process are set out below. Additional guidance for Council officers is included in the supporting Procurement Procedures and templates.

### 3.2.1 - Step 1: Needs Identification and Planning

Effective procurement planning is crucial to ensuring that procurement exercises address Council needs.

Each Department of the Council will maintain a **procurement pipeline**, setting out planned procurement exercises. Each Department must ensure that the Procurement Unit receives appropriate, **timely notification** of the need for a procurement exercise, to ensure appropriate steps are taken to manage the procurement process. Early planning is particularly important where the expected contract value is close to or above the UK procurement thresholds and the Council tender level set out at Appendix 1.

Procurement planning may require **market research** and, in the case of procurement above UK Procurement Act, **pre-market engagement** is encouraged, in particular where the procurement is potentially more complex. Appendix 1, Table 1 sets out the applicable UK procurement thresholds. The Procurement Unit can advise spending departments on this process.

The **value** of a potential contract must be estimated over the lifetime of the contract, including possible extensions.

An approved **business case** is required for expenditure of £50,000 and over (excluding VAT) or, for expenditure of £500,000 and over (excluding VAT), an approved **economic appraisal** is required. These processes provide an opportunity for options to be fully considered. An **approved budget** must be confirmed. The Procurement process cannot proceed until these approvals are in place.

A **procurement plan** for the exercise will be developed and agreed between the spending Department and the Procurement Unit. This will include consideration of the procurement approach, risks, and issues.

### 3.2.2 - Step 2 - Request Quotation and Tender

The spending Department will complete a **specification**. A specification is a set of documented requirements which, in the sense of a procurement project, will be issued to the supply market to ensure that the end product, services or works are fit for purpose, and offer the required quality at the most reasonable cost. The purchasing department will be responsible for specifying their requirements. The Procurement Unit will advise officers on the form of a specification and **evaluation criteria**.

Taking account of regulatory requirements and policy context, the Council has developed and maintains tables summarising the thresholds that apply to Council procurement. These tables can be found at Appendix 1. **Table 2 sets out the thresholds for tenders and quotations including the number of quotes that should be sought**. It is important to note that the thresholds applied must reflect the **full economic cost** over the **duration of a contract** and that care needs to be taken to consider whether **VAT** is / is not applicable to the expected contract amount.

The Procurement Unit are responsible for the advertisement/issue and the collection / collation of the tender/quotations (above £5k) bids. The Procurement Unit are responsible for recording the bids received. Tenders are received via the e-sourcing NI portal, they are time and date stamped. Quotations above £5k are received by email, to [procurement@midandeastantrim.gov.uk](mailto:procurement@midandeastantrim.gov.uk) . Quotations below £5k will be sought by designated officers in the spending department who must ensure email responses are retained for evaluation and audit purposes. The onus is on the potential supplier to ensure that their fully completed submissions are received by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council by the time and date specified. Late submissions will **not** be accepted.

### 3.2.3 - Step 3 - Evaluation and Award

All quotations / tenders will be evaluated according to the evaluation criteria set out in the tender documents. Evaluation will generally include pre-qualification criteria and assessment criteria (usually cost and quality) but also, for example, timescales and other relevant factors.

**Evaluation panels** will be established prior to receipt of tenders / quotations. Only trained staff will be able to sit on evaluation panels. Evaluations will be documented, and a signature will be required for all panel members as well as written confirmation that they have no conflicts of interest. Submissions will be checked for completeness. The Council will seek to award quotations and tenders to suppliers that provide the **Most Advantageous Tender (MAT)**, that provides the most value to Council, which is not necessarily the lowest priced submission.

The Council will exercise **due diligence** in assessing bidder's ethical practices where appropriate and will request standard compliance information with each procurement exercise where this is required.

The Council has established governance arrangements, including a Scheme of Delegation, that determines who / what body may approve the **award of contracts**, including Direct Award Contracts. This is set out at Appendix 1, Table 3.

### **Direct Award Contracts (DACS)**

DACs are contracts where a contract is awarded to a supplier without competition.

There are limited circumstances where DACs may be permitted. These are laid out in Schedule 5 Direct award justifications in the Procurement Act 2023. Examples include:

- where works, supplies or services can only be supplied by a particular supplier,
- matters of extreme urgency,
- exclusive rights / intellectual property ownership.

Before proposed DACs are submitted to SMT for approval, they must be reviewed by the Procurement Unit, then approved by the Senior Management Team (SMT). They must be approved in line with the Scheme of Delegation at Appendix 1, Table 3.

Procurements that meet the UK Public Tender threshold are subject to a standstill period. This period requires at least 8 working days to elapse between the announcement of the contract award decision and the date of contract award. Subject to not receiving any notice during the standstill period of any intention to legally challenge the award process, Council will proceed to award the contract to the preferred bidder.

As part of the Procurement process feedback will be made available to all bidders. This will be formed from the panels moderated comments. Officers will be required to provide further feedback upon request from the Procurement Unit.

### **Emergency Procurement**

Under the Procurement Act 2023, a contract may be directly awarded without a competitive tender process if it is strictly necessary for reasons of **extreme and unavoidable urgency**. In circumstances as outlined above, a direct award contract

would be the appropriate action. It will remain a requirement for the DACs to be approved in line with the scheme of delegation.

### 3.2.4 - Step 4 – Contract Management and Closure

The **sealing** of a local government document is governed by Section 120 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, which refers to the requirement for the official seal of the council to be affixed to certain documents, including contracts of £30,000 or more. The Common Seal of the Council is kept secure in the custody of the Clerk and Chief Executive. The Common Seal of the Council shall not be affixed to any documents unless the sealing has been authorised by a resolution of Council or of a Committee of Council having lawful powers or to which Council has delegated its powers in this behalf, authorising the acceptance of any tender, purchase, sale, letting or taking of any property the issue of any stock, the presentation of any petition, memorial, or address, the making of any rate or contract, or the doing of any other thing, shall be a sufficient authority for the sealing of any document necessary to give effect to the Resolution.

The seal shall be attested by the following persons at the sealing, namely, the Mayor or Chair of the Council (or other Member of the Council) and the Clerk and Chief Executive (or in their absence, another senior Official duly authorised). An entry of the sealing of every deed and other document to which the Corporate Seal shall have been affixed shall be made in the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council at which the affixing of the Seal took place.

Once contracts have been awarded, Contract Managers are responsible for ensuring that the appropriate agreements are sealed and that sealed copies are returned to the Procurement Unit for reference and retention.

Contracts will be entered on the Council's **contract register and input to the Tech One system by the Procurement Unit**. The Procurement Unit will allocate Contract Managers who will have access to all associated information via Tech One. Contract Managers must ensure that any Purchase Order raised is aligned with the correct reference and contract information.

Any increases in value of works during the lifetime of contracts will be considered by Council but this would have to be in line with inflation, and related to Recommended Retail Price (RPI), National Living wage and minimum wage changes.

**Successful contract management** is an extension of the tendering/contract award phase and should be planned for from the start of the procurement process.

Each contract will have a nominated **contract manager**, responsible for overseeing its administration and management, including monitoring expenditure and delivery. The role encompasses a wide range of activities, from core administrative tasks—such as raising requisitions, inspecting goods on receipt, and subsequently receipting goods and services on the system to authorise payment—to more developmental and strategic responsibilities. These include supplier

relationship management, supplier development, and market management, as well as ensuring the delivery of social clauses.

Supplier relationship management focuses on building and maintaining effective partnerships with suppliers to secure quality, reliability, and value. Supplier development involves supporting and enhancing supplier performance, capability, and innovation to meet organisational needs. Market management refers to monitoring and influencing the wider supply environment, identifying opportunities, managing risks, and ensuring competitive and sustainable sourcing. Contract managers are responsible for the management of any social value delivery plan, whether via an external consultant or personal responsibility.

Contract Managers will be responsible for ensuring that expenditure remains within the approved budget, business case, and governance approval levels. If spend is projected to exceed approved budget and / or business case limits, then the contract arrangements should be reassessed as soon as possible and action taken to address the issue. Continued contract spend once the contract and business case / economic appraisal limits have been reached is not permissible.

Contract managers should maintain written correspondence with bidders in line with KPI's and contract performance. Contract Managers should refer to the Council's terms and conditions and consult with the Procurement Unit / Legal Services if termination is to be considered.

### 3.3 Roles and Responsibilities

#### 3.3.1 Members

The [Northern Ireland Local Government Code Of Conduct For Councillors](#) sets out the principles and rules of conduct for Elected Members. The Code of Conduct outlines expectations for councillors in several key areas:

- **Principles:** Fundamental ethical standards for public service, such as acting with integrity and in the public interest.
- **Rules of Conduct:** Practical guidelines for applying these principles, including:
  - **Declaration of Interests:** Councillors must declare any personal interests that could affect their decisions.
  - **Use of Council Resources:** How councillors should responsibly use council resources.
  - **Behaviour:** How councillors must treat others with respect and avoid unfairness.
  - **Planning Element:** Specific guidance for councillors regarding planning matters.
- In relation to procurement, it is particularly important that Councillors observe the Code's requirements for the disclosure and declaration of any potential conflicts of interest and receipt of gifts and hospitality and the Council's

financial threshold for declaring levels of gifts and hospitality received as set out in the Council’s Gifts and Hospitality Policy.

- In relation to contracts coming under UK Procurement thresholds (see Appendix 1, Table 1), the Council is required to maintain an assessment of conflicts of interest throughout the duration of the contract, so the provisions of the Code apply beyond initial contract award.
- Receipt and review of procurement reports to Committee on contract awards, DACs, and related procurement issues, including approval in accordance with the Council’s Scheme of Delegation.

### 3.3.2 Officers

- All employees are expected to follow this Policy and the related procurement procedures and guidance and take the appropriate action to meet the aims and objectives.
- The Senior Management Team must familiarise themselves with and should, bar in exceptional circumstances, which must be documented, observe this policy and associated governance arrangements and ensure that it is understood and observed by Departmental staff.
- The Senior Management Team must ensure that procurement pipelines are created and maintained for their Department and regularly discussed with the Procurement Unit.
- All officers should have regard to the [Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees](#) and related Council policy on gifts and hospitality and conflicts of interest.
- Officers should ensure that they have attended procurement training before becoming involved in procurement evaluation exercises.
- Departments are responsible for allocating a contract manager for each contract. This person will be responsible for monitoring contract spend, including ensuring it remains in budget and within the approved business case (where applicable) and governance approval levels. They will also monitor delivery and outcomes (including social value outcomes, where applicable) and ensure that re-tender exercises are properly planned, and included in the procurement pipeline. If a Contract Manager leaves their post or is absent due to illness, the relevant Director must promptly allocate a suitable replacement to ensure continuity of contract management.
- Where external funding is involved, the service area can lead on any necessary procurement in order to ensure adherence to the funders’ requirements and the eligibility of and safeguarding of the awarded funds.

### 3.3.3 Central Procurement Unit

- The Procurement Unit shall, without diminishing the responsibility of the officers requesting the procurement exercise to deliver an appropriate specification etc., be responsible for the control and delivery of all procurement with an anticipated value over £50,000 (excluding VAT).
- The Procurement Unit shall also provide assistance to services in quotation exercises.
- The Procurement Unit will provide training and support to spending departments / officers on the application of this policy and related procedures.
- Members of the Procurement Unit are also expected to observe and comply with codes of conduct set out by the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply.
- Preparation of reports to SMT, Committees and Council on procurement activity, including contract awards and DACs.
- Responding to requests for procurement / contract information made under the Freedom of Information Act (FoIA).

### 3.4 Related Policies

A non-exhaustive list of current policies that should also be reviewed in conjunction with this Policy is provided below:

- Code of Conduct for Local Government employees
- The Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors
- Fraud & Bribery Policy
- Fraud Response Plan
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Retention and Disposal Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Modern Slavery Policy Statement
- Access to Information Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Conflicts of Interest Policy (UNDER DEVELOPMENT)
- Scheme of Delegation
- Complaints Policy and Procedure

### 3.5 Complaints

The Council is committed to the provision of high-quality services. Our Complaints Handling Procedure reflects the Council's commitment to valuing complaints.

Occasionally, things can go wrong. When this happens, we will investigate all complaints received and advise you of the outcome. We will conduct thorough, impartial, and fair investigations of customer complaints so that, where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on each case. You may find the following guidance useful in submitting a complaint: [Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy](#).

### 3.6 Document and Information Management

The Council maintains a retention and disposal policy for document management, including procurement, contract, and financial records. The Procurement Unit will ensure that the records it holds comply with this policy and will ensure that related records are held securely. Spending departments will be responsible for ensuring that contract documentation it holds is also held in compliance with retention and disposal policies and held securely.

The Freedom of Information Act, 2000 establishes a general right of access to all types of recorded information held, subject to certain conditions and exemptions. The Council is obliged under the Freedom of Information Act to release certain information about the suppliers it contracts with into the public domain within certain limits and according to relevant, qualified exemptions.

The Council also has a responsibility to comply with the UK General Data Protection (UK GDPR) Regulations and Data Protection Act 2018 and will apply appropriate measures to ensure compliance with the Act in all its procurement activity, including through its contractual terms and conditions.

## Appendix 1 - Procurement Thresholds and Approval Limits

Table 1 (below) presents a range of UK Procurement threshold values, the procurement process and approval levels that apply. It reflects Council policy and Regulations.

In estimating the value of a procurement, the following guidance should be applied:

- The contract must be estimated over the **lifetime of the contract; this should include possible extensions**. The possibility of extension or enhancement of any contract should be included in the specification/terms of Reference otherwise it may not be possible to extend or enhance contracts awarded. Officers should always seek guidance from the Procurement Department before enhancing or awarding any contract.
- When estimating value, it is necessary to aggregate all amounts potentially payable to estimate total contract value.
- Any increases in value of works during the lifetime of contracts must be the percentages stated by the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) and Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Table 1 - UK Procurement Thresholds<sup>1</sup>

Type of Purchase	UK Procurement Thresholds (inc VAT)	Net value (information only)
Goods	£207,720	£173,100
Services	£207,720	£173,100
Light Touch	£415,440	£346,200
Works	£5,193,000	£4,327,500
Concessions	£5,193,000	£4,327,500

- All above threshold projects must be entered on Find a Tender Service (FTS) <https://www.gov.uk/find-tender>
- All above threshold projects that receive EU funding must be advertised on Tenders Electronic Daily (TED) and consideration must also be given to print media advertisements for cross border projects.
- Any funded projects should refer to the funders preferred procurement path for guidance on the preferred route; the more stringent process should be used.

<sup>1</sup> From January 1<sup>st</sup> 2026, reviewed every two years.

- For SEUPB funded projects a copy of the invitation to tender, contract award notice and a procurement report must be retained for audit purposes.
- Light touch contracts are contracts for certain social, health, education and other public services and are subject to more flexible procurement rules. Check with the Procurement Unit to see if this applies.

Table 2 – MEA Procurement Thresholds

	Procurement Limit (ex VAT unless stated)	Approval Required	Procurement process Required (exclusive of VAT)
1.	Under £1,000	Budget holder	Evidence of a minimum of 1 emailed quotation sought and retained by appropriate departmental officer.
2.	£1,000 to £4,999.99	Budget holder	Evidence of 2 emailed quotations being sought / retained where this is possible by Budget Holder.
3.	£5,000 to £9,999.99	Budget holder/Procurement Unit*	Evidence of 3 written quotations being sought where this is possible by Central Procurement Unit.
4.	£10,000 to £49,999.99	Budget holder/Procurement Unit*	Evidence of 4 written quotations being sought where this is possible by Central Procurement Unit.
5.	£50,000+	Director up to £100k CX up to £150k Council >£150k	Publicly advertised tender. Process managed by Central Procurement Unit.
6.	Above UK Procurement Act Thresholds (see Table 1)	Council	Publicly advertised tender. Process managed by Central Procurement Unit.

\*requests for quote (at £5k+) / tender forms must be completed and approved by the budget holder / Director and provided to the Procurement Unit before the commencement of the procurement process.

Table 3 –Delegated Authorities

Item	Approval Thresholds	Comment
Direct Award Contract approvals	Up to £100k, Directors Up to £150k CEO Above £150k Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget required.</li> <li>All DACs subject to Procurement Unit review before submission to SMT and Committee / Council.</li> </ul>
Business Case / Economic Appraisal approvals	Up to £100k, Directors Up to £150k, CEO Above £150k Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget required.</li> <li>Business cases required for procurements over £50,000 exc VAT.</li> <li>Economic Appraisals required for procurements over £500,000 exc VAT.</li> </ul>
Tender recommendations approval	Up to £100k, Director Up to £150k, CEO Above £150k, Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget required.</li> <li>Tender awards notified to Corporate Policy, Resources &amp; Governance Committee.</li> </ul>
Contract award approval, in accordance with Contract Management procedure	Up to £100k, Director Up to £150k, CEO Above £150k, Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations are required for anything above public tender threshold (£50k).</li> </ul>
Contract Sealing	over £30k	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contract managers are responsible for sending all relevant information to democratic services.</li> <li>Contract managers should ensure procurement receives a sealed copy for information and retention.</li> </ul>

Bodies which sit outside of council approval structure should follow the Council's procurement policy for guidance. The following partnership areas do not require Council approval, approval is granted by director/SMT, via signed Letter of Offer:

- Labour Market Partnership
- Grant Funding Unit
- Police and Community Safety Partnerships.

## Appendix 2 - Abbreviations Commonly used in Procurement / MEA

Abbreviation	Meaning
CoPE	Centre of Procurement Expertise.
Council	Mid & East Antrim Council.
CPD / DoF	Construction & Procurement Delivery (CPD) which provides a central procurement function for central government in NI under the Department of Finance (DoF).
DAC	Direct Award Contract.
EU	European Union, issues EU Directives in relation to EU funded procurement (such as PEACE+).
FoIA	Freedom of Information Act.
ITT	Invitation to Tender.
MAT	Most Advantageous Tender.
MEA	Mid & East Antrim Council.
NIPPP	Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy, issued by NI Executive and mandatory for central government departments, NDPBs and public corporations (excludes local government).
PIN	Prior Information Notice.
PO	Purchase Order.
PPN / PGN	Procurement Policy Notes / Procurement Guidance Notes.
PQQ	Pre-Qualification Questionnaire.
RfT / Q	Request for Tender / Quotation.
VfM	Value for Money.