
Procurement Strategy

**2025/26 to
2027/28**
January 2026



Ribble Valley
Borough Council

www.ribblevalley.gov.uk

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Context

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this strategy is to clearly communicate to all stakeholders how we foresee the development of our Procurement activities over the medium term. It sets out how we will conduct procurement over the period 2025/26 to 2027/28, ensuring value for money and delivering public benefit.

It replaces and updates the 2022/23 to 2024/25 strategy and reflects legislative reform under the Procurement Act 2023 which came into effect on 24 February 2025, and the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS).

The National Procurement Strategy for Local Government in England 2022 has been used as the framework for this strategy, following the continuing themes of:

- Showing Leadership
- Behaving Commercially
- Achieving Community Benefits

The National Procurement Strategy was developed by and for councils in England and it is endorsed by the Local Government Association's [Procurement National Advisory Group \(NAG\)](#) and has been informed by a survey of all council procurement leads.

There are also five cross-cutting issues that have been addressed which are seen as Enablers in helping us to achieve actions under the three themes.

- Adding Value
- Developing Talent
- Exploiting Digital Technology
- Enabling Innovation
- Embedding Change

LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

The Council will have regard to the statutory objectives in section 12 of the Procurement Act 2023: delivering value for money; maximising public benefit; sharing information to allow proper scrutiny; and acting with integrity.

The Council will also have regard to the NPPS and Procurement Regulations 2024 and associated guidance, including transparency notices, pipeline publication (where applicable), and contract performance reporting (KPIs for qualifying contracts).

Context

LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

In following the themes within this strategy document and also in undertaking the action plan, full consideration will be given to the Goals within the Council's Corporate Plan, and this strategy document should be read in that context.

Our Goals			
Continue to be a Well-Managed Council Providing efficient services based on identified customer needs	Building a Strong Economy Sustaining a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley	Residents, their Health, and Wellbeing Creating flourishing, healthy, and happy communities	Valuing our Place and our Environment Making the Ribble Valley a place we want to be by creating a safer, stronger, greener, and cleaner Borough



ENABLERS

- Adding Value**
- Developing Talent**
- Exploiting Digital Technology**
- Enabling Innovation**
- Embedding Change**

Procurement Strategic Themes

Showing Leadership

Engaging Councillors and Senior Management

We will seek to ensure that the Corporate Management Team and Councillors are provided with the necessary level of procurement advice where needed.

This will be guided by our Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules, both of which are reviewed on an annual basis and have been updated to reflect the Procurement Act 2023, associated regulations and NPPS priorities.

Where necessary we will ensure key staff are trained to a level commensurate with their involvement in commercial and procurement activities.

Where projects are planned, we will ensure early engagement of Financial Services procurement staff at the outset of projects to assist in planning the best procurement routes.

As part of this work, we will ensure that the council's Procurement Strategy is reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

We will ensure that members are able to make key decisions around major projects that are delivering on our Corporate Plan and that they are in a position to maintain oversight of such contracts at committee meetings and working groups as necessary.

For major projects we will ensure that project plans include the carrying out of full detailed risk assessments.

Working with Partners

Whenever we undertake procurement activity, we will first look for any parity with the activities or requirements of other services within the council and look to undertake any procurement corporately and with the help of Financial Services procurement staff.

In undertaking such work, we will consider alternative methods of service provision/procurement and seek to learn from the experiences of others.

Wherever possible we will consider any opportunities to work together with other partners in our procurement activities, be that with other local authorities, health, fire, police, housing, VCSEs or any other partners. This will include the use of frameworks and open frameworks compliant with the Procurement Act 2023.

Engaging Strategic Suppliers

We will undertake regular analysis of our spend and identify our key strategic suppliers and assess any associated risks. We will build on these relationships and also look to potentially share this information with neighbouring authorities where this may be beneficial for joint procurement.

We will ensure close relationships with our strategic suppliers and wherever possible seek to increase efficiencies and savings and improve our contract management arrangements.

Where our needs and requirements change over time, or new areas of procurement activity are started, we will seek to undertake early engagement with suppliers through publication of our intentions to raise awareness prior to any formal tendering through the use of procurement portals such as the Crown Commercial Service website, Contracts Finder.

Should any high value services be subject to external provision, we will publish performance indicators and annual performance information in line with the Procurement Act 2023 and associated guidance.

Behaving Commercially

Creating Commercial Opportunities (including income generation).

Options appraisal will consider in-house, collaboration, framework use (including open frameworks), and competitive procedures to optimise value for money and public benefit.

This is particularly relevant as central government funding is reduced and innovative ways in which to reduce any funding deficits need to be identified.

We will continue to look at opportunities to work with others within this area of procurement.

Managing Contracts and Relationships

We will ensure that all contracts are assigned an internal contract manager. This would normally be the relevant Head of Service. All contracts and any variations within them, will be managed effectively to control costs, secure the quality and timeliness of agreed outcomes and performance levels and minimise the occurrence of risks.

Such contract management will not be confined to project-based procurements.

Where formal contracts are to be awarded, it will be ensured that meaningful performance measures (where applicable) and adequate management information provision are prerequisites. This will include regular contract management review meetings.

Managing Strategic Risk

External providers of services will be proactively engaged with to help identify potential strategic risks to the continued provision of services.

Internally, such reviews of strategic procurement risks will include identification of key suppliers, reviews of their financial viability and any potential reputational issues such as quality issues or risks around association with a particular company.

There will be active management of such potential strategic risks and contingency plans will be developed where needed by services to help mitigate such risks.

Achieving Community Benefits

Obtaining Social Value

We will integrate the principles of Social Value into our procurement activity. This will be balanced against cost, available budgets and overall value for money considerations.

Any tender documentation method statements, formal specifications, or ad-hoc purchases will include references to the achievement of social value and an explanation of what success against that aim will look like in the context of that specific procurement.

Monitoring of social value, where integrated within a contract, will be ensured through the use of contractually agreed performance indicators.

Where there is planned use of framework agreements for our procurement activity, we will endeavour to work with framework agreements that include such considerations.

Any inclusion of Social Value within the scoring mechanism for a tender will only be on the basis that it is fully transparent, measurable and directly correlated to the procurement in-hand. There will be regular monitoring and reporting on the achievement of such Social Value elements.

We will embed the considerations within the council's Climate Change Strategy proportionately and only after careful consideration of such items as whole life costs, circular economy options and carbon impacts. Any implementation would be after approval of the relevant service committee and also after consideration by the Policy and Finance Committee where there are budget implications.

Engaging Local Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Micro-businesses

We will actively encourage engagement with local SMEs and Micro-businesses, particularly within the borough boundary. This will include working with the council's Economic Development team.

Consideration will be given to the 'lotting' of procurements where it may be an option beneficial to the council to provide potentially more attractive smaller or alternative 'lots' within a procurement exercise.

Where incumbent suppliers are SMEs or Micro-businesses, we will ensure that we provide extensive notice of plans to tender or re-tender.

We will also seek to ensure that our procurement timetables allow ample time for tender preparation by SMEs or Micro-businesses, who are likely to have fewer resources to hand for the preparation of such documents.

Enabling Voluntary, Community Social Enterprise (VCSE) Engagement

Our various grant schemes will continue to offer the opportunity to support Voluntary, Community Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations, where they meet the grant criteria, their aims and objectives meet those of the council and where their services supplement our own service provision.

Enablers

Adding Value

We will seek to further add value through the procurement process by reviewing developing best practice and we will continue developing our work in the areas of risk management, category and contract management and sharing between local authorities.

Developing Talent

We will seek to ensure that staff recruited to roles involved in the procurement process have the correct level of skills, or are provided with training, experience or are put forward for professional training (where relevant) to allow them to undertake their full duties with the skills needed.

We will also ensure that those staff involved in procurement, contract management and project management are provided with the correct level of training for their role, as identified within the performance appraisal process.

Key skills around governance arrangements, particularly Financial Regulations, Contract Procedure Rules, Fraud Awareness and Whistleblowing Procedures will also be undertaken as part of our corporate training provision.

Exploiting Digital Technology

We will maximise the use of our purchasing system and its integration with our financial management system.

We will seek to invest in the Procure to Pay (P2P) process in order to enhance streamlining and efficiency.

As we move toward greater automation, the importance of robust internal controls becomes ever more important. We will ensure that we undertake full detailed regular reviews of the controls in place in order to provide assurance that they are working.

We will engage with key suppliers in order to enable better integration and improved functionality between systems.

Where possible we will minimise the use of paper resources and also seek to move to secure technology that may facilitate the submission of tenders and quotes by electronic means, subject to cost considerations.

Enabling Innovation

Prior to starting any tender procedure, we will look at alternative methods of service provision or delivery.

Heads of Service will ensure that timelines for procurements allow them to report their consideration of alternatives and recommendations to the council's Corporate Management Team and also the proposals will be reported to the relevant service committee in order to ensure they are able to provide scrutiny and leadership.

As part of our capital programme bidding process Heads of Service will seek innovation in their proposals and consider the potential for income generation and value creation.

Prior to starting the tendering process, we will ensure that we review any innovative, new or emerging alternative methods of delivering the outcomes we are seeking to procure.

- In considering innovative alternatives, particular reference will be given as to how added social value can be obtained. This will be balanced against cost, available budgets and overall value for money considerations.

Embedding Change

Our Procurement Strategy will be communicated to all staff, and it will be made clear to key staff what their roles are in achieving the action plan.

Where our processes are developed and best practice is identified, we will ensure that this is documented within our procedures.

As our systems and processes change, we will ensure that staff are informed and briefed on new practices.

In encouraging good contract management, we will ensure that the benefits of such monitoring information are maximised and the data is acted on and also utilised in the review of any further tendering opportunities or reviews of alternative service delivery methods.

Action Plan

ACTION PLAN – SHOWING LEADERSHIP					
Action:	Responsible officer:	Potential Target Date:	Resources needed if approved:	Potential barriers/risks	Financial Resources Already Approved?
Engaging Councillors and Senior Management Annual Review of Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules	Head of Financial Services	Annually in March each year to Policy and Finance Committee	No additional financial resources required	Implications of changes to domestic and international law.	Not Applicable
Engaging Councillors and Senior Management General training of staff on Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules	Head of Financial Services	Ongoing. Targeted for any specific changes following the annual review.	No additional financial resources required. However, where external providers are able to be used, this should be able to be funded from existing budgets	Staffing Resources within Financial Services	Not Applicable
Developing Talent Identification of specialist procurement and/or project management training needs	All Directors and Heads of Service	To be identified as part of the Performance Appraisal Process	Within Existing Training Budgets	Prohibitive costs Fast paced changes to legislation	YES: Within Existing Training Budgets

ACTION PLAN – SHOWING LEADERSHIP					
Action:	Responsible officer:	Potential Target Date:	Resources needed if approved:	Potential barriers/risks	Financial Resources Already Approved?
Engaging Councillors and Senior Management Annual Review of Procurement Strategy	Head of Financial Services	Annually to Policy and Finance Committee	No additional financial resources required	Implications of changes to domestic and international law	Not Applicable
Working with Partners Engage with other local authorities again to gauge any appetite for a procurement group.	Head of Financial Services	March 2026	No additional financial resources required	Level of interest from other bodies	Not Applicable
Engaging Strategic Suppliers Annual spend analysis – notably looking at spend, volume of invoices and location. Where possible include SME information.	Head of Financial Services	Reviewed Annually	No additional financial resources required identified as needed at this stage.	Level of detailed information available without charge - particularly around SME classification.	Not Applicable

Action Plan

ACTION PLAN – BEHAVING COMMERCIALY					
Action:	Responsible officer:	Potential Target Date:	Resources needed if approved:	Potential barriers/risks	Financial Resources Already Approved?
<p>Managing Strategic Risk As part of the spend analysis work, and discussions with Heads of Service, our key suppliers will be identified.</p>	All Heads of Service	Reviewed Annually	No additional financial resources required		Not Applicable
<p>Managing Strategic Risk As part of the contract management meetings there will be discussions around risk. Any strategic risks will be documented on the risk management software and planned for within services.</p>	All Heads of Service	Ongoing	<p>No additional financial resources required.</p> <p>However, it may be that there are costs associated with implementing any actions to mitigate identified risks.</p>		Not Applicable

ACTION PLAN – ACHIEVING COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Action:	Responsible officer:	Potential Target Date:	Resources needed if approved:	Potential barriers/risks	Financial Resources Already Approved?
<p>Obtaining Social Value Ensure relevant priority social value outcomes are included in our procurement activity – be this as general questions, management information measures, or as part of the scoring mechanism where applicable.</p>	<p>Head of Financial Services Senior Accountant Procurement Assistant</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>No additional financial resources required</p>	<p>Implications of potential additional costs. Expectation of ‘implementation at any cost’.</p>	<p>Potential for increased costs</p>
<p>Obtaining Social Value Embed the procurement actions under the Ribble Valley Borough Council Climate Change Strategy.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>No additional financial resources required</p>	<p>Implications of potential additional costs. Expectation of ‘implementation at any cost’.</p>	<p>Potential for increased costs</p>

Action Plan

ACTION PLAN – ENABLERS					
Action:	Responsible officer:	Potential Target Date:	Resources needed if approved:	Potential barriers/risks	Financial Resources Already Approved?
<p>Developing Talent (See also under ‘Showing Leadership’) General training of staff on Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules</p>	<p>Head of Financial Services Senior Accountants</p>	<p>Ongoing. Targeted for any specific changes following the annual review.</p>	<p>No additional financial resources required</p>	<p>Staffing Resources within Financial Services</p>	<p>Not Applicable</p>
<p>Developing Talent (See also under ‘Showing Leadership’) Identification of specialist procurement and/or project management training needs</p>	<p>All Directors and Heads of Service</p>	<p>To be identified as part of the Performance Appraisal Process</p>	<p>Within Existing Training Budgets</p>	<p>Prohibitive costs Fast paced changes to legislation</p>	<p>YES: Within Existing Training Budgets</p>
<p>Exploiting Digital Technology Continue to explore any future options for the use of technology in the secure submission, and restricted internal access, to tenders.</p>	<p>Head of Financial Services Head of Legal & Democratic Services</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Past research has shown solutions to be cost prohibitive based on the number of tenders conducted.</p>	<p>Costs</p>	<p>NO</p>

ACTION PLAN – ENABLERS					
Action:	Responsible officer:	Potential Target Date:	Resources needed if approved:	Potential barriers/risks	Financial Resources Already Approved?
<p>Exploiting Digital Technology Review the feasibility of Intelligent Scanning in the Procure to Pay (P2P) process.</p>	Head of Financial Services	December 2026	Past costs have been prohibitive. It is understood that alternative lower cost options are being developed.	<p>Cost of the infrastructure needed.</p> <p>Introduction of new ICT at a time of impending local government reorganisation.</p>	NO
<p>Exploiting Digital Technology Work with targeted suppliers to take advantage where possible of 'PunchOut' technology within our purchasing system.</p>	Head of Financial Services	Ongoing	Potential additional costs for implementation	<p>Resistance from suppliers.</p> <p>Supplier imposed minimum spend constraints</p> <p>Any hidden costs in establishing 'PunchOut' links</p>	Likely Not Applicable
<p>Embedding Change Utilise information from Contract Management meetings and reviews to help inform service provision, and any proposed changes when goods or services are next procured/contracted.</p>	All Directors and Heads of Service	Ongoing	Heads of Service need to ensure that regular contract management meetings are held		Not Applicable