

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Brian Collins, Deputy Leader of the Council

DECISION NUMBER:

25/00083

For publication

Key decision:

Yes, it affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions (the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks).

Title of Decision: Adoption of the Kent County Council Commercial Strategy for 2026-2028.

Decision:

That the Deputy Leader agree to:

- (a) Approve the adoption and implementation of the Kent County Council Commercial Strategy 2026-2028.
- (b) Delegate authority to the Chief Procurement Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to refresh and/or make non-substantial revisions to the strategy where changes do not require additional governance.
- (c) Delegate authority to the Chief Procurement Officer to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, entering into and finalising the terms of relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the above decision.
- (d) Delegate authority to the Chief Procurement Officer to approve the Responsible Procurement Charter and Contract Management Policy as supporting documents to the Commercial Strategy.

Reason(s) for decision:

To establish a Council-wide framework for delivering Best Value through procurement and contract management, aligned with the Council's strategic priorities, financial plans, and the requirements of procurement regulations. The Strategy provides a structured, outcomes-focused approach to commercial activity that supports consistent smarter decision-making, strengthens supplier relationships, and ensures public money is spent effectively and transparently.

By approving the Strategy, the decision will allow the Council to:

- **Embed commercial thinking as a core organisational discipline**, positioning procurement as a strategic lever for achieving Best Value.
- **Enable delivery of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP)** by improving cost control, identifying efficiencies, and supporting smart, data-led commercial decisions.
- **Strengthen supplier relationships and contract performance**, through phased adoption of Supplier Relationship Management (SRM), targeted capability-building, and enhanced governance for high-value and high-risk contracts.

- **Increase support for Kent-based businesses, SMEs¹, and VCSEs²**, by simplifying procurement processes, removing barriers to entry, and embedding a consistent approach to Social Value to deliver tangible community benefits.
- **Ensure compliance with the Procurement Act 2023**, aligning with new statutory requirements around transparency, innovation, and public value.
- Build internal capability and accountability, through committing to commercial skills, clearer policies, and robust performance tracking.
- **Reinforce Kent's leadership in public sector procurement**, building on its CIPS³ Procurement Excellence Award and positioning the Council as a commercially confident, agile organisation equipped to meet future challenges.

Financial Implications

Adoption of the Strategy is expected to be cost neutral, with implementation delivered within existing budgets. The Strategy is designed to generate financial benefits through improved value for money procurement outcomes, cost avoidance, and income generation opportunities.

These benefits will be tracked and reported regularly, aligning with the Council's wider performance and business planning frameworks.

Legal Implications

The Strategy supports the Council's ongoing compliance with the provisions and obligations set out within the Procurement Act 2023 with enhanced governance, procurement, and contract management.

Equalities Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed and is appended to this report. No significant adverse impacts have been identified.

The Strategy includes explicit commitments to inclusive procurement practices and enhanced support for SMEs and VCSEs, helping to ensure equitable access to opportunities and broader community benefit.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee considered and endorsed the decision on 13 November 2025.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

A range of alternative options were considered to determine the most effective way to improve commercial outcomes, deliver Best Value, and build organisational resilience. These included:

1. Do Nothing / Maintain Status Quo

This option involved continuing without a formal strategy and retaining existing priorities and practices. While low-risk in the short term, it was rejected due to:

- Lack of alignment with the Council's evolving financial and policy context.
- Missed opportunities to embed commercial thinking across services.

¹ Small and Medium Enterprises.

² Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprises.

³ CIPS is the Chartered Institute for Procurement and Supply.

- Inability to address inefficiency, inconsistent practices, and capability gaps.

2. Incremental Improvement on Existing Procurement Policies

This approach proposed minor updates to the existing strategy, with limited changes to governance, capability, or delivery models. It was considered more feasible in the short term but ultimately discounted because:

- The previous strategy lacked formal approval, limiting its influence, enforceability, and stakeholder buy-in.
- It may not align with new legislation, particularly the Procurement Act 2023.
- It would not deliver the step-change needed to meet financial pressures or support Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings targets.
- It lacked ambition in addressing systemic issues such as fragmented supplier engagement, supporting local and small organisations inconsistent commercial practices, and limited focus on Social Value.

3. New Strategy (Proposed Decision)

This proposal sets out a final draft of a new strategy that re-defines Kent County Council's commercial ambition. Subject to formal approval, it will strengthen the Council's procurement governance, build capability, and align commercial activity with strategic priorities.

Key features include:

- A clear vision and strategic priorities focused on efficiency, supplier engagement, supporting Kent-based SMEs and VCSEs, Social Value, and compliance and transparency around procurement activity.
- A commitment to professional best practices and continuous improvement.
- Performance monitoring and actions to support delivery of the Strategy.

This proposal was selected as it offers the greatest potential to:

- Drive long-term financial sustainability and support budget recovery.
- Position Kent County Council as a commercially confident, agile organisation.
- Secure Best Value for Kent residents and communities.
- Unite stakeholders around a shared framework for delivery, accountability, and improvement.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None

Signed



Date 26 November 2025