



Kent County Council

Winning for Kent

2026 – 2028

Procurement with Purpose:

*Kent County Council's approach to
delivering Social Value*

Introduction

Procurement is how the Council spends public money, and it is one of our most powerful tools for driving positive change. By deliberately leveraging our purchasing decisions, we can secure not only the goods, services and works we need, but also tangible social, economic and environmental benefits for Kent.

This Policy sets out how Kent County Council (KCC) will use its spending power to deliver its [Strategic Statement](#) and [Commercial Strategy](#) systematically embedding Social Value into procurement, in line with our statutory duties under the **Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012**, the **Procurement Act 2023**, and the **National Procurement Policy Statement**. Social Value through procurement is not an add-on; it is a practical, proven way of achieving wider outcomes alongside core contractual delivery.

KCC proudly serves a population of over 1.6 million residents across one of the largest geographical areas in England. In 2024-25, we spent approximately £1.47 billion with contracted third parties. This scale of spend gives the Council real influence over markets and supply chains, enabling better outcomes for residents, communities and businesses through the contracts we award.

Evidence shows that contracts embedding Social Value can generate around 20% more value without increasing cost¹, meaning wider social, economic and community benefits alongside core delivery. This demonstrates that using procurement to deliver Social Value is achievable, cost-effective and delivers better outcomes for Kent's residents and communities. KCC is committed to using procurement as a strategic lever for change, applying Social Value in a clear, proportionate and outcomes-focused way to maximise the impact of every pound spent.

This includes by:

- **Supporting local employment and creating a broad range of employment opportunities** while addressing social needs including education, health and wellbeing.
- **Improving access to services and strengthening community development** to help build resilient communities and foster economic growth.
- **Promoting apprenticeships and workforce upskilling** to prepare people for future jobs and support lifelong learning.
- **Supporting Kent businesses and Small and Medium Enterprises within supply chains** to help grow the Kent economy, while ensuring fairness and compliance with procurement regulations.

Environmental resilience and efficiency are addressed through a separate, complementary approach aligned with KCC's Environment Plan. While aligned in intent, this reflects different priorities and delivery requirements and avoids duplication.

Social Value is not new to Kent. Officers and suppliers are already delivering strong outcomes, and this Policy builds on that foundation by providing greater clarity, structure and consistency, enabling stronger and more measurable outcomes for Kent's communities.

¹ Social Value Portal, 2024

Background

KCC is committed to delivering goods, services and works that support Kent's communities, businesses and local environment. The Council's Strategic Statement sets out the following priorities:

- Putting Kent Residents First
- Reforming Kent County Council
- Supporting Kent Residents
- Building Better Communities

KCC's Commercial Strategy supports these priorities by strengthening procurement practice to deliver better services, foster effective partnerships and create greater public value. Its objectives include:

- Delivering financial benefits and ensuring a strong return on Investment
- Strengthening supplier management and partnerships
- Supporting local economic growth and generating wider public value
- Ensuring compliance and transparency in all our procurement activities

Our Commercial Strategy emphasises the value of working with suppliers to deliver Social Value through employment, skills development and local economic growth. Embedding Social Value into procurement enables measurable benefits that strengthen Kent's communities.

Understanding local need is central to this approach. The Kent Communities Analysis identifies where Social Value can deliver the greatest impact, ensuring this Policy is tailored to Kent and focused on what will make the most difference to residents and places.

Purpose

This Policy defines how Social Value is embedded in KCC's procurement activity and clarifies the roles of services, procurement teams and suppliers. It ensures a consistent approach across the procurement lifecycle so that every contract delivers measurable benefits for Kent's communities.

Policy Context

The Council's approach to Social Value in procurement is shaped by legislation and national policy that apply to local authorities, alongside best practice guidance.

Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

This [Act](#) places a statutory duty on public authorities, including local councils, to consider how procurement can improve economic, social, and environmental well-being during the pre-procurement stage.

Procurement Act 2023

This [Act](#) introduces a public benefit objective and embeds Social Value as a core consideration in all public procurement. It introduces the 'Most Advantageous Tender' principle, requiring that evaluation goes beyond cost and quality to include wider benefits.

National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS)

Local authorities are required to have regard to the [NPPS](#), which sets priorities such as supporting economic growth, improving social and economic outcomes and delivering environmental quality through procurement.

Procurement Policy Notes (PPNs)

Guidance such as [PPN 002](#) and the [Social Value Model](#) provide useful frameworks for embedding Social Value in procurement processes. While PPN 002 applies directly to central government, it sets recognised best practice for local authorities and the wider public sector.

Together, these frameworks ensure that Social Value is both a statutory consideration and a core principle for achieving wider community, economic and environmental benefits through local government procurement.

Winning for Kent: Social Value at Kent County Council

Winning for Kent means using the Council's spending power to deliver measurable benefits for Kent's residents, businesses and places. Through this Policy, Social Value is the mechanism by which procurement contributes directly to local employment, stronger communities and a more resilient Kent economy.

KCC distinguishes Social Value into two main categories:

Defined Social Value – These are specific commitments explicitly required by the Council and detailed in procurement documentation. Such commitments are strategically tailored to meet the needs of the local community or the specific contract, often aligned with frameworks like the [National TOMs](#) (Theme, Outcome and Measures), or are recommended through legislation and national policy such as the [Social Value Act 2012](#), [PPN 06/20](#), the [National Procurement Policy Statement](#), or the Government's [Social Value Model](#).

Examples include:

- Offering local employment opportunities
- Committing to volunteering hours for community projects
- Spending with local businesses

Defined Social Value commitments are mandatory for the purposes of tender evaluation and must be addressed by suppliers within the tender process to ensure compliance and competitiveness. This ensures that public procurement is designed to deliver broader benefits to the community, over and above core service delivery.

Additional Social Value – This refers to extra commitments that a supplier voluntarily offers, above and beyond what is defined. Such commitments are encouraged throughout the contract process, showcasing a supplier's proactive and innovative approach. Additional Social Value can significantly strengthen a bid, particularly in competitive tenders, and, when considered alongside overall performance and contract requirements, may be considered as part of any future extension considerations.

Examples include:

- Delivering careers outreach to local schools and colleges
- Run 'meet the buyer' events for local suppliers
- Offer pro-bono professional services to Kent community organisations

This type of Social Value demonstrates a genuine commitment to delivering positive impact, including strengthening local supply chains and supporting Kent-based businesses, and helps suppliers stand out from their competitors.

At the point the need is defined, service areas are responsible for identifying the appropriate Defined Social Value, supported by procurement Officers. A proportionate approach will be applied, recognising that not all contracts need both types of Social Value, in order to avoid placing unnecessary burdens on suppliers.

Policy Objectives

KCC is committed to embedding Social Value at the heart of procurement. We will work in partnership with services and suppliers to establish a consistent and proportionate approach, build capability, and ensure Social Value commitments are meaningful, achievable, measurable and aligned with our strategic priorities – delivering real benefits for the people and places of Kent.

To support this, the Policy is underpinned by the following objectives:

Develop a Shared Understanding of Social Value



To ensure Social Value is consistently applied, we will promote a shared understanding across staff, suppliers and partners. Through training, guidance and sharing best practice, we will establish a common language and approach to implementation, evaluation and continuous improvement.

Establish a Consistent Approach to Measurement and Reporting



Social Value must be measurable and visible throughout the procurement and contract management lifecycle. We will implement a consistent process for capturing, monitoring and reporting Social Value, providing clarity for suppliers and assurance for stakeholders.

Focus on Outcomes, Not Just Activity



We will move beyond counting inputs or outputs and focus on outcomes – the positive changes delivered for individuals, communities and the local environment. Our Kent County Council Themes, Outcomes and Measures (KCC TOMs) framework will provide a structured, evidence-based approach that aligns delivery with strategic priorities and strengthens transparency and accountability.

Strengthen Social Value Contract Management



To support effective delivery, we will develop a standardised approach to managing Social Value within contracts. This will enable Contract Managers to clearly record commitments, monitor progress, evidence outcomes and capture impact consistently across the contract lifecycle.

Recognise and Reward Strong Performance



Suppliers who deliver meaningful Social Value will be recognised. Through the KCC Social Value Badges, we will celebrate achievement and support suppliers to demonstrate their commitment to responsible and value-driven delivery.

Our Social Value Priorities

From 2026 to 2028, KCCs Social Value priorities are:



Employer: Promoting local skills and employment.



Economy: Encouraging the growth of responsible businesses in Kent.



Community: Building healthier, safer, and more resilient communities.

These priorities directly support the Council's Winning for Kent ambitions by ensuring procurement activity delivers visible and lasting benefits at a local level.

The priorities will be informed by KCC's Kent Communities Analysis, which identifies the issues that matter most to Kent's residents and where Social Value can deliver the greatest impact. This evidence-led approach ensures Social Value commitments are relevant, targeted and focused on real local need.

By aligning Social Value delivery with Kent's strategic priorities and community insight, procurement becomes more than a transactional process – it becomes a practical mechanism for delivering positive change across the county.

Inclusion of Social Value

Social Value expectations vary depending on contract value, as set out below. This approach ensures consistency for suppliers while maintaining proportionality and accessibility, particularly for SMEs and VCSEs.

Contract value	Social Value expectation
Above public procurement thresholds	Mandatory requirement. Social Value will form part of the tender evaluation.
£29,999 (inc. VAT) and above	Strongly encouraged, with commitments proportionate to the nature of the contract and the supplier's capacity to deliver.
Below £29,999 (inc. VAT)	Not required under this Policy, but suppliers are encouraged to propose voluntary Social Value initiatives where appropriate.

In exceptional circumstances, it may not be appropriate to include Social Value or to apply the minimum 10% weighting. In such cases, the procurement or commissioning officer must submit a clear written justification to the Commercial Standards and Improvement Team. This will be reviewed in consultation with the Commercial and Procurement Divisional Management Team, who will determine whether approval is granted.

How we score Social Value in our tenders

For contracts valued above the public procurement thresholds, Social Value will form part of tender evaluation and carry a minimum qualitative weighting of 10%.

The Kent County Council Themes, Outcomes and Measures (KCC TOMs) framework is used to structure and assess Social Value, ensuring alignment with local priorities and community need.

Suppliers must clearly set out their proposed Social Value commitments in a proportionate and deliverable way. Detailed scoring methodologies and submission requirements will be set out in procurement documentation and supporting templates.

Implementation

Pre-procurement

Embedding Social Value begins at commissioning and service design stage, before procurement formally starts. For above-threshold procurements, KCC will share its Social Value priorities and Kent Communities Analysis during early market engagement. This helps suppliers understand local priorities and provides an opportunity to test the feasibility of proposed Social Value initiatives within the relevant market.

KCC will support early engagement through guidance, example commitments and practical tools such as Social Value Menus and templates, ensuring accessibility for SMEs and VCSEs. This early collaboration encourages innovation, partnerships and realistic delivery.

Tendering

At tender stage, Social Value expectations become formal requirements. Social Value requirements will be included in tender documentation and form part of the bid evaluation.

Transparent scoring and guidance on proportionate commitments will support a level playing field for all suppliers. Social Value commitments agreed at this stage will form part of the contract, ensuring they are deliverable and enforceable.

Contract Management

Contract award marks the start of Social Value delivery. All agreed commitments must be delivered over the life of the contract.

Social Value delivery will be reviewed alongside contract performance throughout the contract term. KCC will work collaboratively with suppliers throughout the contract term, offering support where needed and addressing risks early.

Measurement and Reporting

Reporting ensures Social Value delivery is visible, credible and accountable. KCC will collect and analyse data on supplier commitments and outcomes, supporting robust reporting and continuous improvement.

For contracts where Social Value is mandatory, suppliers must submit a minimum of one Social Value case study per contract year (or per contract if under one year), using the Council's standard template.

KCC will publish an Annual Social Value Statement, detailing activity, outcomes and progress against priorities. The first Statement will cover the 2027–28 financial year and will be published on the Council's website.

Social Value commitments should demonstrate additional benefit arising from the KCC contract, rather than activities already delivered as part of a supplier's standard operations. Case studies will be used to evidence this distinction.

Where data quality allows, Social Value reporting will include a place-based breakdown to show how benefits are being delivered across Kent. This will help residents and Members understand the difference procurement is making in their local area, supporting transparency and accountability.

Real-World Impact: Winning for Kent in Action

The Council will use short case studies to highlight how Social Value commitments are being delivered in practice. These will show:

- What was committed
- What was delivered
- Who benefited
- Where the impact was felt

Case studies will be used in annual reporting and public communications to demonstrate existing good practice and illustrate the types of outcomes the Council seeks to increase through this Policy.

Recognising and Rewarding Our Suppliers

KCC is committed to recognising suppliers who deliver strong Social Value outcomes.

At the end of each financial year, suppliers who meet or exceed their contractual Social Value commitments will be acknowledged through **KCC Social Value Achievement Badges**, verified by the Contract Manager.

These digital badges:

- Provide public recognition of contribution to Kent's communities
- Support suppliers in demonstrating Social Value delivery in future tenders
- Help distinguish responsible and value-driven businesses

Levels of Achievement

- **Gold** – Delivery of Social Value commitments in full and to the required standard
- **Platinum** – Delivery that exceeds contractual commitments and achieves additional impact

By recognising excellence, KCC aims to embed Social Value as a shared ambition rather than a compliance exercise, strengthening partnerships and delivering lasting benefits for Kent's residents, economy and communities.

Governance

The Chief Procurement Officer is accountable for the effective implementation and maintenance of this Social Value Policy. Oversight will be provided by the Commercial Standards and Improvement Team, who will support delivery and ensure Social Value is consistently embedded across commissioning, procurement and contract management activities.

Compliance with the Policy will be monitored through proportionate assurance mechanisms, including reviews of procurement documentation, contract performance and supplier Social Value commitments.

To support effective implementation, KCC will publish this Policy alongside a supporting toolkit, providing clear guidance and practical resources for officers and suppliers. An overarching Action Plan will set out agreed actions, responsibilities and delivery milestones to ensure Social Value is consistently integrated across all stages of the procurement lifecycle.

Through these governance arrangements, the Council will maintain transparency, accountability and continuous improvement, ensuring Social Value commitments translate into measurable benefits for Kent's communities.

Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains up to date, reflects changes in legislation, and continues to align with KCC's strategic priorities.

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