
From: Brian Collins, Deputy Leader of the Council
Clare Maynard, Chief Procurement Officer

To: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 2 July 2026

Subject: Adoption of the Kent County Council Winning for Kent: Procurement with Purpose Policy 2026-2028

Decision no: 26/00032

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

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: All Electoral Divisions

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary:

This report seeks approval for the adoption and implementation of the Kent County Council Winning for Kent: Procurement with Purpose Policy for 2026–2028. The Policy sets out a clear, proportionate and user-friendly framework for using procurement to deliver wider public benefit (Social Value), aligned with the Council’s Strategic Statement, Commercial Strategy, and statutory requirements under the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 and the Procurement Act 2023.

It establishes a consistent, outcome-focused approach to embedding Social Value across the procurement cycle, ensuring requirements are proportionate to contract size, value, risk and complexity, and do not create unnecessary barriers for SMEs and VCSEs.

The Policy is structured around three core themes – economy, employment and community – providing a clear framework to focus activity on priority outcomes and ensure maximum value is achieved from every pound spent for wider public benefit. It strengthens governance and clarity for officers and suppliers, ensuring that public spending delivers measurable economic and community benefits for Kent residents, supports local jobs, businesses and supply chains, and achieves Best Value.

Recommendation(s):

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE or make recommendations to the Deputy Leader on the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix B) with reference to the Winning for Kent: Procurement with Purpose Policy 2026-2028 set out in Appendix A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kent County Council spends approximately £1.47 billion annually through third-party contracts to deliver essential services for residents. This significant level of public investment provides an opportunity to strengthen Kent's economy, support responsible businesses, promote local employment and skills, and contribute to resilient communities.
- 1.2 National policy, including the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, the Procurement Act 2023 and the National Procurement Policy Statement, requires public bodies to consider wider public benefit (Social Value) in procurement, with increasing expectations for consistency and transparency.
- 1.3 This Policy sets out a practical and proportionate approach that aligns with these requirements while focusing on delivering meaningful outcomes for Kent's economy and communities.

2. Key Considerations

- 2.1 The Policy sets out a clear and consistent approach to embedding Social Value within Kent County Council's procurement activity, recognising it as a key means of delivering wider economic, social, and community benefits alongside core contractual outcomes.
- 2.2 A key policy choice is the adoption of a proportionate and evidence-led approach, ensuring requirements are appropriate to contract size and complexity while remaining accessible to suppliers, including SMEs and VCSEs, and supporting inclusive market participation.

3. Background

- 3.1 Kent County Council's annual third-party spend represents a significant public investment and an opportunity to secure wider public benefit through procurement activity.
- 3.2 Effective procurement enables the Council to deliver services while supporting economic growth, local employment and skills, and stronger, more resilient communities.
- 3.3 National policy, including the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, the Procurement Act 2023, and the National Procurement Policy Statement, requires public bodies to consider wider public benefit (Social Value) in procurement. These requirements place increasing emphasis on consistency,

transparency, and the ability to demonstrate how public spending delivers broader outcomes.

- 3.4 Previous internal reviews, alongside feedback from suppliers and partners, have identified variation in how Social Value has been applied across the Council. This has included inconsistent approaches between services and a lack of clarity in expectations for suppliers, limiting the Council's ability to maximise impact and consistently evidence outcomes.
- 3.5 This Policy responds to these findings by translating legislative requirements into a clear and proportionate framework aligned to Kent's priorities. It aligns the Council's approach to Social Value with Kent's evidence-led priorities and supports compliance with statutory obligations.
- 3.6 It provides greater consistency and in how Social Value is applied and offers clear guidance for officers, suppliers – including Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprises (VCSEs).
- 3.7 The policy builds on the strategic direction set out in the Council's Strategic Statement and Commercial Strategy, which recognise the role of procurement in delivering wider public value and supporting local economic growth, formalising a consistent approach and strengthening governance arrangements.
- 3.8 The Policy has been developed following engagement with internal stakeholders and consideration of feedback from suppliers and partners. It reflects national policy requirements, responds to legislative change, and aligns with local priorities.
- 3.9 No public consultation has been undertaken or is planned; however, feedback previously received from suppliers and partners has been taken into account in developing the Policy.

4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- 4.1 A range of options were considered to determine the most effective way to deliver wider public benefit (Social Value) through procurement:

1. Do Nothing / Maintain Status Quo

This option involved continuing without a formally approved policy and retaining the current approach. It was rejected due to:

- Continued inconsistency and variation in approaches across services.
- Lack of clarity for suppliers on expectations and delivery.
- Missed opportunities to maximise benefits for Kent's economy and communities.
- Inability to demonstrate compliance with statutory requirements, including the Procurement Act, and increasing expectations for transparency and accountability.

2. Incremental Improvement

This option proposed making minor adjustments to existing guidance and processes. While offering some short-term improvements, it was discounted because:

- It would not provide the clarity, consistency, or accountability of a formal policy framework.
- Approaches would continue to vary across the Council, limiting impact.
- Opportunities to maximise wider public benefit through procurement would continue to be missed.
- It would not provide sufficient assurance of compliance with the Procurement Act, increasing the risk of challenge or audit concern.
- It would limit the Council's ability to evidence impact and reduce inefficiencies.

3. New Policy (Proposed Option for progression)

This proposal introduces a new, formally approved policy to strengthen the Council's ability to use procurement as a strategic tool for delivering wider community and economic benefits.

Key features include:

- A clear, consistent, and proportionate framework for embedding Social Value across the procurement cycle.
- Alignment with national legislation, including the Procurement Act, and Kent's evidence-led priorities.
- Improved governance, transparency, and accountability.
- Clear and accessible expectations for suppliers, supporting a business-friendly approach.

4.2 The option of introducing a new Social Value Policy was selected as it offers the greatest potential to:

- Deliver consistent and measurable wider public benefit through procurement.
- Align procurement activity with Kent's strategic economic and community priorities.
- Strengthen compliance, governance, and assurance.
- Maximise the positive impact of public spending for Kent residents and communities.
- Provide a clear and consistent framework for officers and suppliers, improving efficiency and delivery.

5. **How the proposed decision supports the Council's Strategic Statement**

5.1 The Policy supports the Council's Strategic Statement by strengthening the use of procurement as a strategic lever to secure Best Value for Kent residents. It aligns with the Council's commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes at the least possible cost by using its purchasing power to support local employment, develop skills, strengthen local supply chains, and enable the growth of responsible Kent-based businesses.

- 5.2 By embedding proportionate, outcome-focused Social Value requirements into procurement, the Policy ensures that public spending delivers wider economic and community benefits alongside core service delivery, maximising the impact of every pound spent.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Adoption of the Policy is expected to be cost neutral, with implementation – including training, guidance, and awareness-raising – delivered within existing budgets and absorbed within current officer roles. Social Value commitments secured through procurement are expected to be delivered within the agreed contract value and are not anticipated to result in additional cost, instead representing demonstrable added value.
- 6.2 Monitoring and reporting will be integrated into existing procurement and contract management processes, ensuring a proportionate approach aligned to contract value, risk, and market capacity. A consistent methodology for measuring Social Value outcomes will strengthen transparency and audit assurance, with clear distinction maintained between Social Value commitments and core contractual requirements.
- 6.3 Any indirect impacts, such as officer time for contract management and reporting, will be managed within existing resources, with flexibility to scale requirements and maintain Value for Money.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Policy supports compliance with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 and the Procurement Act 2023, including duties relating to transparency, value for money, and public benefit, and aligns with the expectations set out in the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS).
- 7.2 Any impacts arising from Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) will be managed through the established transition and governance framework. The Policy's proportionate and flexible approach supports continuity during this period of change.

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed, and no significant adverse impacts have been identified.
- 8.2 The Policy promotes inclusive procurement and supports SMEs and VCSEs, helping to ensure fair access to opportunities and broader community benefit.
- 8.3 The Policy is expected to create positive impacts by encouraging supplier diversity, supporting community-focused Social Value commitments, and reinforcing ethical, transparent, and equitable practices across procurement and contract management.

9. Data Protection Implications

9.1 No Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is required as the Policy does not involve processing of personal data and poses no data protection risks.

10. Other corporate implications

10.1 The Policy complements the Council's Commercial Strategy and supports wider transformation activity across procurement and commissioning. It strengthens the Council's ability to secure Best Value by ensuring that procurement delivers both high-quality services and wider economic and community benefits.

11. Governance

11.1 The Commercial Standards and Improvement Team will oversee delivery of the Policy and ensure Social Value is consistently embedded across commissioning, procurement and contract management activities.

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

11.3 Responsibility for the operational implementation of the Policy, including how Social Value requirements are applied within individual procurements, will sit with the Chief Procurement Officer under delegated authority.

11.4 Monitoring and reporting of Social Value outcomes will be delivered through existing procurement and contract management processes, supporting transparency and enabling the Council to evidence delivery of wider public benefit

11.5 The delegated authority to refresh the Policy enables it to remain current and responsive. Any updates made under delegation will be limited to non-material revisions that do not alter the overall policy intent or require further governance approval and these will be made in consultation with the Deputy Leader.

11.6 This decision provides delegated authority to the Chief Procurement Officer to take all necessary actions to implement this decision, including (but not limited to) entering into and finalising the terms of relevant contracts or other legal agreements.

12. Conclusions

12.1 The adoption of the Winning for Kent: Procurement with Purpose Policy for 2026–2028 establishes a clear, consistent and proportionate framework for embedding Social Value in procurement. It strengthens the Council's ability to secure Best Value, ensure compliance with legislative requirements, and maximise the impact of public spending. The Policy supports the delivery of meaningful economic and community outcomes for Kent, positioning KCC to use its purchasing power effectively as a strategic lever for positive change for residents, businesses, and communities.

Recommendation(s):

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE or make recommendations to the Deputy Leader on the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix B) with reference to the Winning for Kent: Procurement with Purpose Policy 2026-2028 set out in Appendix A.

10. Background Documents / Appendices

- Appendix A – Winning for Kent: Procurement with Purpose Policy 2026-28
- Appendix B – Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

11. Contact details

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