

26 NOVEMBER 2024**KEY DECISION? NO****REPORT NO. ACE2413****PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2025 – 2028****SUMMARY**

Procurement legislation in the UK is in the process of being significantly reformed, most notably with the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023 (due to come into force February 2025). As a result, the Council is required to review and update its Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) within its constitution and its Procurement Strategy (attached as Annex A).

The current Procurement Strategy covers the period 2020 to 2024. The new Strategy sets out the Council's strategic vision and priorities for procurement for the next three years, from 2025 to 2028. As a duty of the new Act, it also has regard to, and aligns with, the National Procurement Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION:

Cabinet is recommended to approve and adopt the revised Procurement Strategy attached to this report, including the introduction of new performance measures from 1st April 2025.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This paper presents the Council's revised Procurement Strategy for 2025 to 2028, attached as Annex A.
- 1.2. This strategy has been developed to align with the Council's strategic vision and objectives, such as supporting and promoting the use, wherever possible, of local businesses and SMEs, and delivering on the agenda of wider social value and sustainability.
- 1.3. Upon agreement, the Council will go on to develop its revised Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) in February 2025 and embed delivery within service plans for 2025/26.
- 1.4. This strategy also introduces new performance measures in order to effectively monitor the Council's performance against these objectives.

2. BACKGROUND

Procurement Reform

- 2.1. Procurement is the process of acquiring goods, works and services. The process spans the whole life cycle, from identification of needs to the monitoring of performance, through to the end of a contract or the end of the useful life of an asset.
- 2.2. The importance of effective procurement has never been greater for local government. The demand for public services is increasing, while resources have reduced significantly in real terms. The pressure to find greater efficiencies and improve productivity is driving Rushmoor to look for different ways to deliver better public services for its community.
- 2.3. In addition to these pressures, the reform of procurement legislation through the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023 means that the Council has been required to review and redefine its arrangements.
- 2.4. Importantly, in introducing the Procurement Act 2023, the Government replaces the concept of contracts that are the 'most *economically* advantageous' with 'most advantageous'. This subtle change draws attention to the fact that delivering the quality and wider community benefits required may not always be delivered by the tender of the lowest value.

Supporting local Small & Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector

- 2.5. VCSEs are a collective term for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector. Over 75 percent of VCSEs deliver public services where they are based, with strong links to that locality. Their place-based solutions can create a greater impact for those most in need, who are hard for the traditional public sector to reach.
- 2.6. VCSEs contribute to economic growth, making the economy more innovative, resilient and productive. They can open up opportunities for people to engage with their community, foster belonging and enrich lives. Therefore the VCSE sector's unique role in public services is vital.
- 2.7. Small and medium-sized enterprises (businesses) are known as SMEs. In relation to its procurement activities, the UK Government currently defines SMEs in accordance with the table below:

Size of business	Staff headcount	Annual turnover
Medium	Under 250	Under £44 million
Small	Under 50	Under £9 million
Micro	Under 10	Under £2 million

- 2.8. Historically, SMEs have faced a range of barriers in accessing procurement opportunities and in winning contracts. These barriers include but are not limited to;

- contracting authorities being unaware of SMEs and the types of goods and services they can potentially provide;
- SMEs viewing the procurement process as overly bureaucratic;
- SMEs not having the capacity to bid for opportunities and compete with large business; and
- the process of procurement often being undertaken on the basis of cost therefore ruling out the ability of SMEs to demonstrate their wider value.

2.9. The Council's reviewed Procurement Strategy seeks to address these barriers and monitor performance in the number of contracts awarded to SMEs and VCSEs.

2.10. In addition, the Council will, wherever possible, look to use local suppliers. A supplier can be considered 'local' where the organisation's operations are carried out within the same UK region as Rushmoor Borough Council (consisting of the nine counties of Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Surrey and West Sussex).

2.11. This definition would have the Council consider any organisation within the Southeast region of the UK as being local. It would however be of greater benefit to the communities Rushmoor serves if the organisation is based within Rushmoor itself, or employs people from within Rushmoor. Although this is not always appropriate to consider during a procurement process, wherever possible it should form part of the assessment criteria.

3. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

Approval of the Procurement Strategy 2025 to 2028

3.1. It is proposed that Cabinet approves and adopts the attached refreshed and revised Procurement Strategy, enabling the Council to clearly define its new objectives and align its business activity in this area.

3.2. The practical delivery of these objectives will be set out in service planning for 2025-26 and through the update of the Council's CSOs, due to be completed by the end of February 2025.

Performance Indicators

3.3. Currently the Council does not have performance indicators for procurement, despite the level of spend the Council commands and the positive influence it could potentially have in the local area if it were to focus on local SMEs and VCSEs when the opportunity arises.

3.4. The following datasets are suggested outcome measures that will be used to interpret the success of the new procurement strategy:

- Percentage (%) of new procurement activity over £5k where social value had a weighting of 10% or greater in the assessment criteria
- Percentage % of new contracts over £5k provided to organisations based within the Southeast Region
- Percentage % of new contracts over £5k provided to SMEs or VCSEs

3.5. In addition, when the Council has data sets that allow longer term comparisons to take place (either by successfully creating historic/base line data – or once data has been collected for a sufficient time frame), to also record/report:

- Percentage (%) increase in numbers of contracts given to SMEs or VCSEs
- Percentage (%) increase in contracts given to organisations located in the Southeast Region

Alternative Options

3.6. No alternative options are available as the Council is required make these changes to reflect the Procurement Act 2023. The content of the Strategy can be updated and/or varied based on Member feedback prior to implementation.

Consultation

3.7. All key stakeholders within the Council have been consulted during the development of this revised strategy, including Finance and Legal Services.

3.8. The proposed strategy was taken to PPAB on 23rd July 2024 for their comment and feedback, to aid in its development. A high level of engagement was received, with a great deal of interest from Members given its cross-cutting nature.

3.9. All PPAB comments were considered and as a result the strategy was strengthened in a number of areas. This included the areas of sustainability and climate change, the inclusion of ethical employment and the inclusion of a commitment to work with the Economy and Growth team to engage with local organisations.

4. IMPLICATIONS (of proposed course of action)

Risks

4.1. There are no significant risks associated with this strategy. Greater risk implications would exist should the Council not have in place a procurement strategy that does align with the national strategy.

Legal Implications

4.2. No significant legal implications if appropriately aligned with National strategy.

Financial Implications

4.3. Moving to determining procurement by the ‘most advantageous’ tender indicates that cost may not always be the overriding factor during future procurement activity. In order to deliver greater social value, promote the use of local SMEs/VCSEs or favour bids with greater emphasis on sustainability, it must be recognised that there may be an associated increase in costs. This would be discussed and agreed on a case-by-case basis and no procurement activity will be designed to exceed agreed budgets.

Resource Implications

4.4. No implications for resources, delivery will be through the work of the existing Procurement Team arrangements.

Equalities Impact Implications

4.5. The equality impact assessment screening tool guidance indicates no negative impact on the community. On the contrary, the strategy is designed to be beneficial to the local community and have a universally positive impact.

Other

4.6. No other implications for consideration.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1. The Cabinet is recommended to:

- Approve and adopt the revised Procurement Strategy 2025-28

6. LIST OF APPENDICES/ANNEXES:

- Annex A – Rushmoor Borough Council Procurement Strategy 2025-2028 v2.0

7. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

8. CONTACT DETAILS:

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Procurement Strategy

2025–2028

Version 2.0 26/11/2024

Review Date 31/12/2028

Rushmoor Borough Council Procurement Strategy 2025 – 2028

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Procurement is the process of acquiring goods, works and services, covering both acquisition from third parties and in-house providers. The process spans the whole life cycle, from identification of needs to the monitoring of performance, through to the end of a contract or the end of the useful life of an asset.
- 1.2 The importance of effective procurement has never been greater for local government. The demand for public services is increasing, while resources have reduced significantly in real terms. The pressure to find greater efficiencies and improve productivity is driving the Council to look for different ways to deliver better public services for its community. In addition, the reform of procurement legislation through the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023 means that the Council has been required to completely review and redefine its arrangements.
- 1.3 The impact of procurement is far greater than just the definition of a 'process'. The Council can play a pivotal role in promoting economic growth, sustainability, and community well-being for the local area.
- 1.4 In introducing the Procurement Act 2023, the Government replaces the concept of contracts that are the 'most economically advantageous' with 'most advantageous'. This subtle change draws attention to the fact that delivering the quality and wider community benefits required may not always be delivered by the tender of the lowest value.
- 1.5 This strategy sets out the Council's vision for procurement and priorities for the next 3 years to 2028. As a duty of the new Act, it also incorporates the National Procurement Strategy (as came into force on 28th October 2024).
- 1.6 The Council aims to deliver quality services that are responsive to the needs of the local community and deliver optimum value for money. It is also important that the strategy reflects both the Council's compliance obligations and its procurement aspirations.
- 1.7 Effective procurement forms a continuous cycle of action and improvement, from identification of needs through to the review of delivery and achievement of outcomes. It includes procurement and contract management activity. The stages are interdependent – with each stage building on the previous in order to improve outcomes.
- 1.8 Appendix 1 sets out the governance, structure and responsibilities for procurement across the Council. These must be viewed in conjunction with the Council's Contract Standing Orders, Scheme of Delegation and Financial Regulations found within the constitution.
- 1.9 The strategy in itself will not lead to effective procurement; it is the commitment of the Council's members, senior managers and staff undertaking procurement activity which is key to its success.

- 1.10 Rushmoor's vision and aims set out in this strategy detail the contribution that effective procurement arrangements can make to a range of socio-economic factors. These include a successful local economy, a thriving voluntary sector, community empowerment and value for money.

2 Rushmoor's Vision for Procurement

- 2.1 The Council's vision for procurement over the term of this strategy is to **demonstrate value for money through the effective procurement of goods, services and works on a whole life basis, whilst generating wider benefits for the local community and taking positive steps wherever possible to reduce the impact on the environment.**

3 Strategic Procurement Aims

- 3.1 Success of this strategy will depend on several factors:
- Political and senior management endorsement and support
 - Council-wide recognition of the importance of the role of procurement in delivering improvement and efficiency
 - Improved forward planning by service areas
 - Co-ordination of procurement across Council departments to achieve potential economies of scale
 - Adequate resourcing of projects for procurement activity
 - Adequate support and resource throughout the procurement cycle
 - Continuous effective management of risk
 - Management of performance shortfalls and adequate tools to tackle poor performance
 - Engaging with Rushmoor's businesses to ensure local Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs) can benefit from local procurement opportunities
 - Continuity of knowledge throughout the procurement phases and the delivery of regular and effective training
 - Designing and managing all procurement activity and associated procedures in order to enhance achievement of the Council's strategic aims

The Council's strategic procurement aims are as follows:

3.2 Achieving Value for Money

Value for money is paramount in fulfilling the Council's commitment to taxpayers and delivering public services efficiently. The Council will place value for money at the forefront of all procurement activities. This means optimising the use of public funds by balancing effectiveness, efficiency and economy over the life-cycle of a product, service or works to achieve the intended outcomes of the procurement. This includes wider socio-economic and environmental benefits and impacts.

Value for money does not always mean the lowest cost. There are many aspects to achieving value for money through procurement. Consideration should be given to selecting a procurement model that is proportionate to the value and risk of individual contracts.

It also requires a proportionate approach to the evaluation of cost and quality; where the costs can be broadly predetermined there will be a higher weighting towards quality and other strategic goals.

3.3 Delivering Social Value

Wider benefits to the local community are often referred to collectively as the delivery of 'social value'. The delivery of social value will be considered within all procurement activities where it is possible and reasonable to do so.

The foundations of social value in procurement are in the Social Value Act 2012. This places a requirement on the Council to:

“Consider, prior to undertaking the procurement/commissioning process, how any services procured might improve economic, social, and environmental well-being”.

It requires the Council to consider how the services procured might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.

The Local Government Act 2000 further reminds the Council that fundamentally, an objective of any local authority should be:

“The promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area.”

Alongside the Council's local priorities, all procurement activity must have regard to the following outcomes, where it is relevant to the subject matter of the contract and proportionate to do so:

- Creating resilient local businesses and opportunities for quality local employment and skills development.
- Encourage the delivery of works and services by groups in the local charity or voluntary sector
- Improving innovation, supply chain resilience and security of supply
- Taking positive steps to tackle climate change and reducing waste

Procurement activity will be structured to achieve these aims; including the specification of goods, services or works to be purchased or the award criteria which will determine the most advantageous tender.

Whilst it will be beneficial to consider such additional benefits, achieving them without overburdening suppliers is crucial. Officers will ensure that they do not place onerous requirements on suppliers or use disproportionate clauses in tenders and contracts.

As a priority area for the Council, the Social Value Policy is attached at Appendix 2 and sets out the Council's approach to ensure that all resources are used wisely and that they protect and enhance the environment whilst ensuring the efficient use of resources and delivery of value for money.

The Council will look to manage its spend effectively to bring social, environmental and economic advantages to the community. The Council recognises the significant challenge in balancing and promoting open, fair and transparent procurement whilst ensuring that the local community benefits. Where possible, the Council commits to actively supporting local businesses, small businesses and Voluntary Community Social Enterprises to help them bid for work seeking to ensure the most appropriate route to market is taken.

3.4 Promoting Carbon Reduction and Sustainability

Sustainability is an important consideration when making procurement decisions and helps ensure that the Council considers the environmental impact of procurement decisions, including the reduction of waste.

Officers will have regard to the Climate Change Statement, strategic framework and action plan developed to ensure the Council can achieve its objective of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. This will only be achievable if Carbon impacts are considered as part of all procurement exercises.

Sustainable procurement is a culture and should be considered in the development of specifications as well as in the evaluation of procurement exercises.

The first step in sustainable procurement is reducing the need to procure. It is also important to pay attention to the whole life cost/lifecycle and longevity of a product, reducing the use of 'single use' products where possible is a simple way to incorporate sustainable procurement.

Consideration of the supply chain is important but not just of the supplier itself – where possible there needs to be consideration of how a supplier sources raw materials and/or product, as well as subcontractors.

The following examples highlight how the Council can promote carbon reduction / sustainability measures:

- Whole-life costs should be considered, e.g. is a higher capital cost offset by reduced operational costs due to a more energy efficient product.
- Products which are harmful to the environment will not be purchased where a less damaging alternative is available. e.g., the use of independently certified wood from sustainable forests e.g., FSC.
- A reduction in quantity and/or quality (where direct environmental benefit is evident) should be considered in any specification.
- Consideration of draw down contracts, where supplies are delivered under the contract as the need arises, rather than requiring upfront numbers of products which lay unused and will ultimately be disposed of. e.g. quantities of promotional leaflets.
- The Council will specify products which are made from recycled products, at end of life can be recycled, can be re-used, or will biodegrade, wherever possible.

- Products which operate in an energy efficient manner should be specified and those which cause minimal damage to the environment in their production, distribution, use and disposal should be considered more highly when awarding marks in the allocated quality question.
- Suppliers are key to the delivery of sustainable procurement. They will be encouraged to continually improve their sustainability profile. Understanding how suppliers manage their waste is a simple first step in determining the sustainability principles of a supplier. For example, if they are not separating waste for recycling they are unlikely to consider sustainability at the heart of their business;
- The Council is working towards the reduction of the carbon footprint of its premises and will continue to pursue this by actively reducing its energy consumption in relation to its associated contracts within this area. Proactive steps should be scored as well as suppliers demonstrating they procure fuel from sustainable sources e.g. the use of green energy supplier or biofuels.
- The use of environmentally positive selection criteria based on sustainability principles should be applied where appropriate.

3.5 Improving Commercial Focus, Enhanced Transparency and Accountability

Nationally there is a drive to improve public sector commissioning and procurement to help transform the way public services and value for money are delivered.

In common with many other local authorities, the Council faces significant financial pressures over the medium-term. Savings need to be made by using spending power innovatively and strategically. Understanding current spend habits and supply base, contract reviews, competition and procurement best practice will assist in delivery of savings.

This means improving the skills of our leaders, both members and officers, so their teams can design service provision, influence external parties, and shape and manage markets to get the best outcomes.

This can be done by creating commercial opportunities, effectively managing contracts and supplier relationships and incorporating effective risk management.

Spending public money requires high levels of accountability and transparency. Public procurement operates in a highly regulated environment that is governed by legislation and policies set by the Government through statute and case law, and locally through the Council's constitution.

The Council will continually improve upon its transparency in procurement processes, providing stakeholders with visibility required by the Procurement Act 2023, associated regulations and The Local Government Transparency Code 2015.

The Council has an obligation under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 to take a robust approach to slavery and human trafficking and is committed to ensure that the Council's contractors and suppliers comply fully with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, wherever it applies.

The Council has adopted the transparency statement (Appendix 3) as part of the commitment to disrupting Modern Slavery.

The Equality Act (2010) (the Act) sets out anti-discrimination law in the UK. It identifies 'protected characteristics': age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnerships. The Act sets out the public sector equality duty (PSED) which applies to most public authorities in England, such as local authorities, police, schools, universities and central government departments. It also applies to organisations carrying out a public function. It therefore includes private companies or voluntary sector organisations that have been contracted to carry out public functions on behalf of a public authority.

The Council will take appropriate steps to ensure that it's suppliers engage in ethical employment practices, such as applying the real living wage and having effective welfare, health policies, anti-bullying and harassment policies, to name but a few examples.

The Council is committed to ensuring that procurement and equality are appropriately integrated to ensure compliance with its statutory obligations and to promote its vision of valuing diversity throughout its partnership and contractual working.

In practice the Council will take this into account in its tender evaluation and contracting processes, a potential contractor's approach to equality in terms of its employment practices and service delivery. It will do this by asking potential contractors relevant questions and including appropriate provisions in its contract documents relating to these matters. This enables the Council to meet its continuing legal obligation to comply with the duty.

3.6 Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of the economy. It is vital the Council supports businesses to achieve sustainable growth and opens up public procurement opportunities to more SMEs, voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs) creating a thriving, competitive marketplace. SMEs not only play a key role in communities by providing a local service and employment but can also offer innovative solutions to public service delivery.

The Council will take steps where appropriate to ensure that we level the playing field for SMEs, VCSEs and start-ups to compete in public procurement by reducing and removing barriers in its procurement processes. Wider engagement with local businesses, the voluntary sector and educational establishments will form a key part of the Procurement Service's annual work plans, working with the Economy and Growth Team to ensure local businesses have the opportunity to benefit from local procurement opportunities.

Appendix 1: Roles and Responsibilities

Members are responsible for:

- Cabinet are responsible for this Procurement Strategy and reviewing progress on the strategic aims.
- Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee (CGAS) are responsible for ensuring compliance with the Contract Standing Orders.
- Procurement activity may require direct Member involvement during key decisions in the procurement process, for example as part of a major procurement project where:
 - A new service or a substantially varied service is being considered.
 - There is high public interest.
 - There is significant reputational or financial risk.
 - There is a significant risk of failing to meet legislative requirements.

Corporate Management Team (CMT) are responsible for:

- Management of the strategy and to review progress against the implementation of the actions.
- Strategic leadership and governance of procurement.
- Ensuring the Procurement Strategy aligns with corporate objectives.
- Overseeing the arrangements for procurement and to ensure they are operating effectively.
- Ensuring value for money and risk management are considered as part of any procurement activity.
- Ensuring equality and sustainability are considered at each stage of the procurement process.

Services Managers and Relevant Staff are responsible for:

- Each relevant service manager is responsible for ensuring that the staff in their areas have the right level of skills to deliver effective procurement and will also monitor all procurement activity in their services.
- Staff involved directly with the purchase of goods, services and works must ensure they comply with this strategy, and the Contract Standing Orders, with reference to guidance made available by the Procurement Team; and conduct relationships with suppliers and the Council in an ethical and appropriate manner to ensure they promote their employer in a positive way.

The Service Manager for Procurement is responsible for:

Maintaining procurement guidance in line with best practice, and to monitor procurement activity across the Council, including:

- Coordinating this procurement strategy on behalf of the Council and leading on the implementation of the procurement aims.
- Providing guidance to contract owners in the control and management of contracts.
- Development and maintenance of procurement documentation, procedures, guidance and web pages to publicise procurement plans, information and advice to potential suppliers and staff; to comply with transparency requirements and promote the vision and strategy.

- Providing assistance to contract owners in the planning and co-ordination of improvement of current contracts, business continuity, exit strategies and post contract appraisals and reviews.
- Ensuring the procurement process eliminates the potential for fraud and favouritism towards any supplier.
- Supplier analysis to identify supplier base, spend per supplier, spend per category.
- Coordinate and monitor the Council Contracts Register to allow improved advanced planning for procurement and contract management activity.
- Organising training for staff, to include specific procurement training, induction and Contract Standing Orders.

Appendix 2: Rushmoor Borough Council Social Value Policy

Introduction

This policy outlines the approach that will be taken in order to ensure that all resources are used wisely, that the Council protects and enhances the environment whilst ensuring the efficient use of resources and delivery of value for money.

What is Social Value?

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires the Council to consider how the services it procures might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. It is defined as improving economic, social and environmental wellbeing from public sector contracts over and above the delivery of the services directly required at no extra cost. Used properly, additional social value can be beneficial to both suppliers and councils and represent a joint effort to exploit maximum value from procurement.

Definitions of Economic, Social and Environmental Outcomes

Economic outcomes: providing contributions to the local economy and economic growth that supports social outcomes. Retaining, re-circulating and leveraging funds in local areas – a wider contribution to skills, tackling unemployment and maintaining employment.

Social outcomes: contributing to a vibrant and healthy community. Community based actions. Equality, diversity, cohesion and inclusion – local relationships, partnerships and people.

Environmental outcomes: relate to protecting, promoting and enhancing the environment. Supporting local activities to improve the environment.

These outcomes are defined as:

- Helping the VCSE sector in Rushmoor to become more sustainable
- Delivering more targeted employment and skills opportunities for Rushmoor residents
- Engaging with SMEs in Rushmoor and the local area about supply chain opportunities and public sector procurement processes;
- Ensuring that all goods, works and services the Council procures are sourced ethically
- Supporting Rushmoor Borough Council's commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030

Aims of the Policy

The Council aims to ensure that expenditure benefits local communities wherever possible. The Council will:

- **Encourage a diverse base of suppliers:** Promoting supplier diversity; including the participation of local SME's and 3rd sector organisations, and local suppliers in general.
- **Meeting targeted and recruitment and training needs:** Offering a range of apprenticeships, training and skills development opportunities as well as employment opportunities for local people.

- **Community Benefits:** Maximising opportunities for local organisations to participate in our supply chains and encouraging suppliers to make a social contribution to the local area.
- **Promoting greater environmental sustainability:** Minimising waste and pollution, supporting carbon reduction initiatives, furthering energy efficiency and other sustainability programmes.
- **Promoting fair employment practices:** Ensuring workforce equality and diversity in supply chains
- **Improving council economic sustainability:** Engaging businesses in delivery of additional social value will have a range of direct and indirect economic benefits to the Council. This includes improving viability of SMEs in the borough, providing additional support to third party providers to ensure better community benefits, and resulting in the eventual reduction in costs to the Council of providing services

Appendix 3: Modern Slavery Transparency Statement

Introduction

This statement sets out Rushmoor Borough Council's (the Council's) commitment to understanding all potential modern slavery risks related to its business and measures taken to ensure that there is no slavery or human trafficking in its own business, or in its supply chains.

The Council recognises its responsibility to notify the Secretary of State of suspected victims of human trafficking as introduced by Section 52 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, as well as its general responsibility under safeguarding to take a strong approach to any allegations of modern slavery and human trafficking.

The Council is committed to preventing slavery and human trafficking in its corporate activities and to ensuring that its supply chains are free from slavery and human trafficking. The Statement sets out practices already in place at the Council and committed actions moving forward.

What is modern slavery?

Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking, slavery, servitude and forced labour and can include:

- sexual exploitation;
- labour exploitation;
- forced criminality;
- organ harvesting;
- domestic servitude;
- debt bondage.

Anyone can become a victim of modern slavery, with particularly vulnerable groups including:

- unaccompanied, internally displaced children;
- children accompanied by an adult who is not their relative or legal guardian;
- young girls and women;
- former victims of modern slavery or trafficking;
- homeless individuals.

Partnerships

The Council works in partnership with a wide number of agencies in order to combat modern slavery, including:

- Safer North Hampshire Community Safety Partnership
- Hampshire Constabulary
- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Modern Slavery Partnership

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Modern Slavery Partnership's main objectives include:

- To raise awareness of modern slavery
- To combat modern slavery by working in partnership
- To identify and support victims of modern slavery
- To pursue perpetrators of modern slavery

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Modern Slavery Partnership provides guidance, training and best practice to partners across the County, ensuring all organisations are equipped to tackle this issue.

At a local level, Safer North Hampshire work with Hampshire Constabulary to identify and manage any victims or perpetrators of modern slavery. Safer North Hampshire operate under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the duty to prevent crime and disorder, which includes modern slavery and trafficking. A monthly meeting, the Vulnerabilities Operational Group tracks individuals of note as well as resulting actions.

Policies

The Council reviews its policies and procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure they remain compliant and fit for purpose. The following policies and procedures are considered to be key in meeting the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act.

- **Safeguarding**

Rushmoor Borough Council is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. The Council has a comprehensive Safeguarding Policy which all staff and councillors are expected to read and adhere to. The Council carries out Safeguarding training for all frontline staff biennially, has Safeguarding champions across departments and participates in multi-agency partnerships to protect and safeguard people.

- **Recruitment**

Rushmoor Borough Council vets all new employees ensuring they are able to confirm identity, qualifications and are eligible to work in the United Kingdom as well as following up references. The Council safeguards agency workers by ensuring agencies used are reputable and have appropriate policies in place to safeguard workers.

- **Pay**

The Council operates a job evaluation scheme to ensure employees are paid fairly and equitably, taking into account The Equality Act 2010 and the National Joint Council for Local Government Services. The council's pay and reward policy is based on fairness, affordability, consistency, flexibility, market rates and to encourage and reward achievement.

- **Employee Code of Conduct**

The council's Employee Code of Conduct makes clear to employees the actions and behaviours expected of them when representing the council.

The Employee Code of Conduct promotes a high standard of conduct based around honesty, accountability and respect to maintain public confidence in services provided, with any breaches thoroughly investigated.

- **Whistleblowing**

The Whistleblowing policy forms part of the council's corporate governance arrangements to ensure that employees are confident in the reporting and investigation of malpractice including fraud, corruption, and unethical conduct.

- **Members Code of Conduct**

The Members Code of Conduct details Members responsibilities with regard to dealing with residents and all members of the community in a fair manner, putting the public interest first.

Supply Chains

It is a priority for the Council to ensure ethical trading, responsible sourcing and prevention of modern slavery and human trafficking throughout its supply chains.

The Council is committed to:

- full transparency of its supply chain;
- ensuring people who provide products and services used by the council are treated fairly, and their fundamental human rights protected and respected;
- ensuring new suppliers understand the council's requirements before commencing any work, and that existing suppliers comply with these requirements.

The Council procures goods and services from various suppliers which is governed by the Procurement Strategy and related Terms and Conditions.

The Council will carry out due diligence to ensure suppliers are aware of its expectation during any bid or tendering process, and again prior to new contracts being signed. The Council may request evidence of adequate Modern Slavery policies and procedures from any potential new suppliers, as well as existing ones. Prior to being engaged, all new suppliers will provide written confirmation of compliance with the Modern Slavery Act.

Suppliers may be requested to agree to the Council's Standard Safeguarding Contract Clauses.

If a current supplier is found to meet all statutory requirements but has policies that are lacking or could be improved we may look to work in collaboration with them to improve these, or alternatively suggest an appropriate agency who can assist.

Should the council have serious concerns around a suppliers policies and the safety of those working for them, this should be immediately referred to the councils Senior Management as well as the Contract Manager, and a suitable escalation process followed.