



COMMERCIAL STRATEGY

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

2026 - 2029



  
www.cambsfire.gov.uk



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE**
Working together to improve community safety

Contents

Title	Page
Forward	2
Introduction	2
The National Landscape	3
The Procurement Act 2023	3
Our Strategic Aim s	4
How we Conduct our Procurement Activity	4
The Aims of the Procurement Function	5
How we will meet our Strategic Commercial Aims	5
How We Will Measure Our Success	6
Collaboration	7
Community Risk Management Plan	7
Reporting and Governance	8
Compliance and Legislation	8
Transparency	9
Considerations when Embarking on a Procurement Process	9
Pre Procurement	9
Determining the Procurement Route and Development of Tender Documents	10
Value for Money and Efficiency Savings	10
Supplier Relationship Management	10
Contract Management	11
Our Approach to Achieving Best Value	11
Our Approach to Innovation	12
Our Approach to SME's Charities, Voluntary and Community Sectors	12
Our Approach to Social Value	13
Our Approach to Environmental Considerations	13
Our Approach to Ethical Procurement	14
Our Approach to Sustainability	14
Our Approach to Modern Slavery	15
Our Approach to Fraud, Bribery and Corruption	16

Forward

This Commercial Strategy is not written to be a one size fits all strategy; it is intended to set out the Authority's approach to commercial activity and key aims and objectives. It is written with the intent that it provides a starting point and overarching considerations for commercial activity; the procurement routes open to us and general guidance.

For complex or high value high risk procurements a specific Commercial Strategy will be produced.

This strategy is aimed to be a live document setting out considerations but will be updated to reflect the changing landscape in public sector procurement, which includes The National Procurement Strategy and National Procurement Policy Statements, the markets we operate in taking into account case law and refined best practices to be considered during the period of this strategy.

Out of scope of this strategy is what our internal procurement rules are and these are detailed in the Authority's Contract Standing Orders.

Introduction

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority (known as Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service) vision is for safer communities where there are no preventable deaths in fires or other emergencies.

To achieve this, we need to strive for operational and community safety excellence whilst always demonstrating value for money and putting people at the centre of everything we do.

To support the above we recognise the need to have the ability to buy goods and services in such a way that we deliver value for money on third party spend with our suppliers, partner agencies, in compliance with the Procurement Act 2023 (PA23) and Regulations 2024.

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and actively promotes this within all our commercial activity.

We also recognise the need to help the local community we serve and therefore will "think local" and support participation from SME's when appropriate for the goods, works or services we procure.

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service have, and will continue to face, financial challenges and therefore achieving value for money and efficiency savings through good commercial practices will be essential. We aim to do this by working closely with our suppliers and collaborating where possible utilising existing frameworks and supporting the work of the National Procurement Hub and Blue Light Commercial as well as working closely with our regional partners through the Regional Procurement Group.

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service spent £12m in the last 3 years on goods, works and services. We are committed to fair and equal treatment of all suppliers maintaining openness and transparency in all transactions and commercial relationships.

This overarching Procurement Strategy covers the period from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2029.

The National Landscape

On 26 October 2023 the Procurement Act 2023 received Royal Assent and became enshrined in law. This was followed in March 2024 with the Regulations being laid before Parliament. This represents the biggest change to procurement law in England Wales and Northern Ireland since 2006.

The Procurement Act 2023

On 24th February 2025 the Procurement Act 2023 (PA23) came into effect and legislates how public bodies manage their procurement activity, from start to finish.

PA23 has defined financial thresholds for the procurement of goods, services and works contracts, which are reviewed and published every two years. The next reviews of thresholds are expected in January 2026 and January 2028.

Public contracts of a value 'above threshold', must follow the defined procurement processes set out in PA23.

Procurement opportunities which fall 'below threshold' value are governed by the Authority's Contract Standing Orders.

Our Strategic Aims

As a Contracting Authority, we will:

- Simplify procurement processes and flexibility to better meet the needs of suppliers and the Authority
- Reduce bureaucracy for suppliers with the introduction of a Single Central Digital Platform for all procurement and contract management activity.
- Encourage the use of small businesses, voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises in our geographical area. This will be achieved by ensuring bidding for our contracts is made simpler with quicker procedures, more cost effective for participants with information in relation to contracts and opportunities easier to find on our website.
- Increase transparency, with more recording and reporting throughout the procurement and contract management lifecycle including transparent management of conflicts of interest at regular stages of the commercial lifecycle.
- Support transition into more sustainable procurement and net zero carbon emissions.
- Embed ethical trading practices and ensure systems and processes are robust to prevent fraud, bribery and corruption.
- Be transparent in reporting our expenditure.
- Procure goods and services where cost, quality and social value are considered to give us the most advantageous outcomes.
- Prioritise the health, safety and wellbeing of residents and our staff in all our commercial activity

How we conduct procurement activity

Our Contract Standing Orders set out how we conduct our procurement function, from designing a requirement, to pre-market engagement, to award of contract to the end of a contract.

Our Contract standing Orders set out our internal mechanisms to ensure decision making is at the right level, depending on the value of the contract. Our Contract Standing orders can be found here [CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS 2025](#)

The Aims of The Procurement Function



How we will meet our strategic commercial aims:

The Commercial Team will align commercial activities to support the Authority's strategic vision and day to day operation by delivering professional procurement solutions and advice to our stakeholders in line with the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). We will do this by engaging with stakeholders within the organisation and learning from other organisations.

The Commercial Team will be fully compliant with procurement regulations, ensure all expenditure delivers value for money and delivers the required outcomes. We will provide professional advice and procure all goods works and services with high ethical standards.

We will ensure due diligence is carried out within our supplier base and supply chains to ensure compliance with our approaches to ethical procurement.

We will regularly review our activities to identify areas of improvement and compliances with evolving regulations and guidance.

We will embed sound commercial practices to:

- Work across the organisation and external partners to deliver efficiencies
- Deliver procurements to project timescales
- Understand the market through effective market engagement
- Understand the risks and issues associated with a particular project
- Understand where potential efficiencies and savings can be made through the lift of the contract
- Manage the interface between the sector and the market by good supplier relationship management and engagement helping us to understand the future direction of the market
- Seek opportunities for collaboration and standardisation resulting in efficiencies.
- Ensure that the goods and services we receive deliver to our requirements by having in place robust contract management which will include performance measures.
- Embed legislation and best practice into our procurement processes and documentation.

How we will measure our Success

In the three years of this strategy, we will measure the success of this strategy by: -

- Monitoring contractual expenditure and reporting on efficiencies gained
- Evidence of savings delivered as reported to Blue Light Commercial on behalf of the Home Office
- Annual review of our spend with SME's
- Annual Review of our spend with small and medium local enterprises.
- Annual review of sustainability efficiencies achieved
- Recording of all new collaborations on our centralised collaborations register
- Seek feedback from markets and stakeholders

Collaboration

The Commercial Team is structured to support the objectives of the National Procurement Hub/Blue Light Commercial Organisation Programme which has three guiding principles.

- **Standardise requirements:** developing agreed standard specifications that are operationally driven rather than procurement led.
- **Aggregate volumes:** Fire and Rescue Services and the Wider Blue Light that bring volumes to market typically get better deals. Where possible, we will consider the wider purchasing power of the wider public sector organisations.
- **Collaboratively manage contracts and suppliers:** joined-up engagement, monitoring supplier performance and contract management.

The Commercial Team works across all functions of the service and is structured in a way to actively support the national categories, these being:

- Operational Equipment
- Fire Appliances and Vehicles
- Clothing
- Construction and FM
- ICT
- Professional Services

In addition to this the Commercial Team will always aim to seek collaborative opportunities with Cambridgeshire Police and other Local Authority Partners and neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services.

Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)

Central Government placed a legal requirement on each Fire Authority to produce a publicly available CRMP covering a three to five-year life span.

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Services 5-year plan can be accessed on our website. It sets out how we balance the delivery of core duties in a cost-effective way. Our procurement function is an important strand of activity under 'Value for money' for the delivery of our CRMP objectives.

Our CRMP delivery objectives will be the driver for our procurement activity.

Reporting and Governance

Progress on major procurement projects will be reported and discussed at the quarterly Commercial Governance Board as well as to other relevant project boards and programme boards within the Service.

We will publish relevant procurement notices in accordance with the law and our Contract Standing Orders.

We will document all joint procurement activity with other public bodies.

We will report annually to the Fire Authority on our procurement activity and will report all Direct Awards made to the Fire Authority at the earliest available opportunity.

As custodians of public money, our financial affairs are subject to internal and external audit, and we follow the CIPFA/SOLACE Good Governance Framework when we produce our Annual Assurance Statement.

Compliance and Legislation

All our commercial activity will be compliant with current legislation, case law and national guidance including but not limited to:

- Procurement Act 2023 and Procurement Regulations 2024
- Trade Cooperation Agreement and World Trade Organisation GPA
- Local Government Acts
- Health and Safety Act 1974
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Bribery Act 2010
- Data Protection Acts
- Subsidy Control Act 2023
- Public Services Social Value Act 2012
- Freedom of Information Act 2000 Local Government Transparency Code 2014
- Employment legislation
- Relevant Industry Standards

Transparency

Local Government Transparency Code 2014

We will ensure compliance with the Transparency Code as set out below.

Expenditure exceeding £500

The Authority will publish details of each individual item of expenditure that exceeds £500 on a monthly basis.

Procurement Cards

The Authority will publish details of every transaction on a procurement card on a monthly basis.

Invitations to tender

The Authority will publish invitations to tender for contracts to provide goods and/or services on the Central Digital Platform followed by publication on the Authority's website.

Contracts and Purchase Orders

The Authority will publish details of any contract, commissioned activity, purchase order, framework agreement with a value that exceeds £5,000 on the Authority's Website

.

When embarking on a Procurement Process

Pre-Procurement

We will encourage pre-market engagement, which enables us to assess the reaction of the market to a proposed requirement and procurement approach.

It brings suppliers' perspectives at an early stage, offering potential benefits in terms of making the subsequent procurement process more focused and efficient. This includes market consultations and industry and bidder days, with a view to preparing and informing the market of our plans and to help us define our requirements prior to finalizing procurement documents and advertising the tender.

Market engagement can help the Authority translate desired outcomes into a high-level statement of business requirements that is well aligned with the market, which makes it much more likely that a successful fit for purpose outcome will be achieved.

Pre-market engagement will be conducted in open and transparent way, and the suppliers involved will be treated with fairness and equality to ensure no distortion of competition takes place.

Determining the Procurement Route and Development of Tender Documents

For every procurement undertaken the most appropriate route to market will be considered and the rationale for the choice of procurement route will be detailed in the relevant procurement strategy and required notices.

During the procurement phase the procurement process will be documented, including selection criteria, terms and conditions and timescales, in compliance with the law.

Value for Money and Efficiency Savings

We will track efficiency savings made through procurement and management of contracts.

The Commercial Team will work with suppliers and Authority stakeholders to identify opportunities for further efficiency savings throughout the life of a contract and to shape future requirements.

Supplier Relationship Management

We will maintain contact with relevant markets to continue to build relationships and share information.

We will do this by:

- hosting industry supplier events,
- attending meet the buyer events.
- Speaking at seminars and conferences on topical issues
- Seeking feedback from our suppliers and wider markets regarding our processes
- Engaging with suppliers and markets to ensure the timing of planned procurement activities can be supported by the market

- Hold awareness sessions for small to medium enterprises to guide them and share knowledge of procurement processes
- Holding regular contract management meetings with suppliers
- Engaging with Fire Industries Association to understand challenges within the markets they operate.
- Undertaking supplier site visits

Contract Management

We keep a contracts' register which is maintained and managed by the Commercial Team, with reminders of contract review dates and timescales for re-tender.

For contracts valued above £5m a minimum of three Key Performance Measures will be agreed. Management of these KPI's will take place through the life of the contract and may be changed to reflect the status or requirements of the contract. Performance against these will be documented and published in the Contract Performance Notice on the Central Digital Platform.

For contracts below £5m, performance against KPI's will be reviewed during contract review meetings.

Exit strategies and plans for the end of the contract will be agreed at the procurement stage and may be amended during the term of the contract. For all contracts, where a contract ends either through natural conclusion or by termination, a Contract Termination Notice will be published on the Central Digital Platform.

Regular contact will be maintained between the Authority and its suppliers through documented review meetings where performance against obligations is managed, opportunities for innovation and value for money will be considered.

Supplier financial stability will be monitored through credit checks.

Contract review meetings will be held to identify where future savings and efficiencies could arise.

Our Approach to Achieving Best Value

The Authority's procurement decisions will prioritise achieving the best overall value for money, considering not only price but also quality, social value and other relevant factors to ensure that public funds are spent wisely and deliver optimal outcomes.

The Authority recognises that ensuring value for money is an ongoing priority and we will continue to evaluate and evolve our commercial activities so we can deliver the best possible value to our communities through our procurements and ongoing

contract management to ensure delivery against contractual obligations and working with suppliers to achieve value.

Our Approach to Innovation

One of the objectives of the PA23 is to encourage procurement of more innovative solutions.

We will ensure innovation to procure newer solutions and to design procurement process / route to market to specific needs by:

- Using new and better products and services to improve the quality and efficiency of services
- Utilising knowledge gained through our role in the National Fire Chiefs Council
- Other specialist PPE and operational standards
- Engaging with suppliers early
- Seeking feedback from the market on specifications and procurement routes
- Building capacity into contracts for future innovation

Our approach to Small, Medium Enterprises (SMEs), charities, voluntary and community sectors

We are committed to encouraging small firms and other organisations to bid for contracts, reducing barriers to traditionally non-commercial bodies, as far as possible.

We will identify organisations and groups that can provide goods or services and where possible, we will divide contracts into smaller lots which make it easier for community groups to bid.

In addition to the above, new legislation is expected in early 2026 enabling us as an Authority, when running a competition for a below-threshold contract, to reserve bidding to those suppliers based within the UK or our local area.

Therefore, as an Authority we are able to choose to reserve competitions for below-threshold contracts to Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and/or voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs) within Cambridgeshire

Our approach to Social Value

Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires public bodies to give due consideration to the inclusion of social value considerations when commissioning goods, services, and works.

The Social Value Act does not alter the procurement process; however, it allows us to consider the wider impact (social, economic, and environmental) of the requirements to be delivered.

The Authority will therefore consider how social value may be incorporated into our procurement activity, including but not limited to the following:

- Job creation and training
- Ethical supply chains
- Community engagement e.g. involving local residents, local charities, clean up events in local communities
- Promoting social integration e.g. work opportunities for disadvantaged people
- Supporting local culture and heritage
- Volunteering opportunities for employees
- Environmental sustainability within their organisation and supply chains
- Health and wellbeing initiatives and awareness

In relevant contracts, we will apply a minimum 10% weighting of the overall scores for social value criteria.

Our approach to Environmental considerations

We will, whenever possible, structure our procurement requirements to include:

- Reducing carbon footprint/pollution and improving air quality for example energy-efficient equipment and vehicles
- Minimising waste by re-use and recycling
- Ensuring materials and packaging used in goods that we buy are sourced and manufactured responsibly and meet environmental standards, energy efficient lighting and equipment
- Seek demonstrable sustainability standards e.g. FSC timber products
- We ask suppliers to demonstrate compliance with ISO 14001 or similar standards

Our approach to Ethical Procurement

Ethics can be defined as – “recognised social principles that involve justice and fairness throughout the business relationship; being ethical means following a behaviour perceived as fair by the business community and wider society”. (CIPS, 2021)

We will ensure ethical procurement practices are followed, which include:

- Eliminating malpractice such as fraud, bribery and corruption within our supply chains.
- Acting in an open and transparent manner in all commercial decisions
- Treating suppliers fairly and always acting with integrity and avoiding preferential treatment
- Ensuring no conflicts of interest in commercial activity
- Measures to support sustainability through supply chains
- Measures to eliminate modern slavery throughout our supply chains

Our approach to Sustainability

We are committed to supporting the sustainability aims of the Authority and wider national objectives.

Sustainable procurement is defined as:

“a process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment.”

Sustainable procurement isn't just about buying 'green' products. It also includes:

- planning ahead to manage demand
- effective ongoing contract management
- dealing with supply chain risks and impacts

Therefore, our vision for sustainable procurement is to make continuous Improvements to outcomes of our procurement and other commercial activity for both new and ongoing contracts across the Authority and wherever the Authority provides such services on behalf of other Fire and Rescue Services or Partner Agencies.

We will ensure that sustainability factors are designed into contract specifications wherever possible, having regard to our Sustainability Action Plan.

We will communicate with our suppliers and clearly articulate the sustainability requirements and the need to continually improve to deliver sustainability objectives

Working with our key suppliers to improve their own sustainability performance and that of their supply chain in areas such as:

- Encouraging suppliers to develop and implement effective environmental management systems with the aim of reducing the carbon footprint and introducing processes such as ISO14001 or equivalent.
- Ensuring our suppliers/potential suppliers can provide suitable assurance on the economic, social, and environmental sustainability within their organisation, manufacture, and wider supply chain.
- Where practicable, affordable and permissible, favouring products with a lower environmental impact and avoiding products which contain substances harmful to the environment.
- Reviewing high impact ongoing contracts to identify potential opportunities to reduce carbon, strive for NetZero and enhance positive sustainability outcomes.
- Encouraging existing suppliers to bring forward options to enhance sustainability outcomes for consideration.
- Implementing, monitoring, and acting on suitably and proportionate metrics and KPIs to enable the effective management of our supply chain in terms of sustainability performance where appropriate

Approach to Modern Slavery

Modern slavery is a crime and a violation of fundamental human rights. It takes various forms, such as slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking, all of which have in common the deprivation of a person's liberty by another in order to exploit them for personal or commercial gain. To tackle these crimes, the Modern Slavery Act 2015 was introduced.

Our Modern Slavery Statement can be found on the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Website. For all procurement opportunities we will refer to the published guide which outlines our duties and best practice under the Act. All our contracts will have appropriate conditions relating to the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and will be monitored throughout the contract

We are therefore committed to:

- Implementing and enforcing effective systems and controls to ensure modern slavery is not taking place anywhere in our supply chains.
- Actively promote this approach to all our suppliers and undertake appropriate checks through our contract management.
- Raising awareness locally and nationally about the need for effective due diligence and ethics in procurement.
- Ensure we seek evidence and assurance that the manufacture and distribution chains of clothing or other mass-produced goods are ethical.

Our Approach to Fraud, Bribery and Corruption

Corruption manifests in many, often subtle, ways and can be defined as fraud, bribery, conflicts of interest.

Procurement fraud is any fraud that relates to the purchase of goods and services with the most common types being:

- **Corruption:** Payment or receipt of any unauthorised benefit, including as an example accepting gifts or incentives to influence a decision or achieve a favourable outcome.
- **Conflicts of interest:** where key stakeholders or decision makers have an undisclosed interest which could affect an outcome as they are party to sensitive information. They may have a financial or personal interest in a company
- **Theft of assets:** This could include false accounting and misuse of information
- **Falsifying performance and reports:** This could include submitting false performance measures, suppressing required reporting including regulatory reporting

We have robust checks and balances in place including:

- **Segregation of duties:** requests for and approving financial spend cannot be actioned by one person and financial thresholds and checks are built into the process to enforce the appropriate levels of approval(s).
- **Supplier due diligence:** a request to use a new supplier must be completed within our finance system, upon submission this goes through our Commercial team for review and approval prior to going through to our finance team for final review and set up. Relevant supporting documentation must be provided to submit the request. Bank details are verified.
- **Conflicts of interest:** where there are requests for spend and for new suppliers, the requester must confirm there is no conflict of interest.