



PROCUREMENT

Streamlining Local Authority Procurement

Introduction

Despite processing more than 400,000 invoices a year, generated by more than 37,000 different suppliers Northamptonshire County Council historically had no dedicated procurement team.

Northamptonshire County Council launched a new and far reaching procurement strategy, following the publication of the Gershon Review. In addition to the creation of a new, dedicated 13-strong team it also formed a new 'virtual procurement team'. Members of the virtual team are drawn from each department to act on behalf of senior officers as ambassadors for the project in each area of service, relaying policies, procedures and best practice to members of their respective teams and spreading the procurement 'gospel' across the authority.

Quote

***“A strategy cannot stand alone. It has been vital to reinforce these changes with a change in culture. We are using efficient and user-friendly processes and, crucially, a holistic package of education and training enhanced by the ability to educate our key players on a centrally funded CIPS Corporate Award Training Programme.*”**

Paul White,
Head of Procurement

Improvement through efficiency



East Midlands

emce.gov.uk

Objectives

- To reduce the number of invoices, amount of paperwork and bureaucracy, so saving the authority money
- Introduce new corporate contracts to procurement processes through the creation of a centrally administered system
- Educate council employees on best practice and the importance and benefits a contract based, procurement system brings.

Progress so far: a targeted effort

- The corporate procurement team is now addressing strategic spend while trying to move away from the every day procurement activity to target efforts on the big strategic contracts like highways maintenance and social care rather than the high-volume, but low-value, areas of telecomms, stationery and office equipment
- A Government Procurement Card (a charge card used to buy low value goods and services directly from suppliers) has been launched and numerous corporate contracts have been let, key of which are in telecommunications and the provision of agency staff. Both contracts have drastically reduced the spend, managed the market and reduced the number of invoices and suppliers – both using reverse e-auctions
- More than 60 council staff have undergone training internally to raise awareness of the procurement function. Training packs have also been developed for Chief Officers and Members.

Quote

“By embracing modern procurement practices, Northamptonshire is not only meeting Government requirements under the National Procurement Strategy, but is achieving value for money for the taxpayers of the county, yet maintaining and enhancing frontline services.”

Paul White,
Head of Procurement

A new beginning: key benefits

- The procurement team has achieved savings of £1.1m in Year One and is on track to make an additional £3m of real savings in Year Two, with even more stringent efficiency targets set for future years
- Developing an e-Commerce programme has reduced administration costs
- Departmental employees are now free to invest their time in services rather than the procurement process
- A single point for advice on the procurement process means contracts meet legal and tendering requirements
- The County Council now has strong connections with the East Midlands Centre of Excellence and the Northamptonshire Procurement Forum
- Membership in the Central Buying Consortium has been retained and links have been forged with like-minded authorities
- Northamptonshire is taking a lead role in the regional Fire and Rescue agenda.

Contact

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