

Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

Suggestion

Officer Response

Conflicts of Interest

Sandwell Council staff who are involved in cases where a conflict of interest exists.

Where staff knowingly are aware of conflicts of interests why do they not remove themselves off cases for impartial decisions to be made.

What is the process when a conflict of interest is reported and what action(s) are taken by teams / corporately?

Are staff reminded to declare their conflict of interests, if so, how often?

What policy is in place to screen cases of potential conflict of interests before cases are allocated to Council staff? If no policy(s) are in place are staff trained or aware of the impact a conflict of interest can have on decision making?

Equality

Tackling unconscious bias of all types across the Council.

Use of Resources

Wasting money

Our Procurement Team works to ensure all our purchases are economically advantageous, legally compliant, fair and ethical and that the procurement process is open and transparent

Through our Procurement Strategy and associated procedures, we refer to commissioning and procurement activity as forming part of a **'cycle'**. This cycle begins with the **'identification of a need'** for a particular service or product and ends with **'lessons learnt'** from each particular procurement process that is carried out

Identifying Needs – E.g. what is the need, is it a new need for a service/ product, is the current contract coming to an end and requires re-procurement?

Develop your Business Case – E.g. consider the brief, the overarching objectives of this piece of work, the requirements, political influences that may apply;

Define your Procurement Approach – E.g. consider the route to market, new tender required, existing framework, what Social Value if any could be considered at this stage;

Consider the Competition – E.g. consider how the procurement is going to be released to the market and what tender process has been decided e.g. open/restricted, other?

Evaluate Tenders – E.g. what is the process, what requires consideration against specification;

Contract Award and Implementation – consider approval procedures, cabinet reports and requirements and any additional procedures that need to be followed.

Manage the Contract and Supplier Relationship – E.g. consider KPI's, communication, dispute processes, financial controls, reporting and contract exit strategy

Closure and Lessons Learnt – E.g. review costs, performance, Social Benefits achieved.

Our Vision is to deliver commercially effective and compliant procurement processes across the Council.

We will procure goods, works and services which will ensure excellent customer service and supplier contract management.

We will build the Council's reputation as leaders in procurement, securing innovation, agility, value for money and quality of services.

Value for Money (VFM) Panels

The Council's senior leadership team in response to budget monitoring pressures that became apparent during the 2023/24 financial year asked in early December 2023 for officer panels to be set up to review all new proposed expenditure over £1,000 that wasn't already committed through an existing contract.

The panels are still in place to date and are made up of senior staff across all directorates, who act in a support and challenge role when reviewing new expenditure requests.

The process has provided an internal peer review in relation to whether value for money is being adequately considered, whether procurement rules are being followed, and whether a consistent approach to common expenditure is being applied across the organisation.

	<p>Once the Quarter 1 budget monitoring position for 2024/25 is known, Leadership Team will review whether there is a need to continue operating Value for Money Panels at that time. If the decision is taken to stand them down in the short-term, officers will be able to resurrect the process at short-notice should it be required later in the financial year or at a point in the future.</p>
<p>Council Work Experience Offer Need more Work Experience Placements via Council to give students opportunity to experience face to face work. There are students who live in Sandwell who do not secure work experience because they may live in a house hold that do not have working families. And the once that depending on what their parents/guardian jobs are can support their children to get work experience opportunities. I work in a local State school and 150 students in year 10 have not yet secured any work experience opportunities for the summer. Also, students in year 12 need work experience to put down on their university applications or apprenticeship applications.</p>	<p>Work experience placements are offered across libraries, archives and museums. Those services commit to a minimum of 20 placements per annum.</p>