

Cabinet

9 September 2025

Additional Procurement Forward Plan Report – over £500k (2025-2026) and Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2024-2025 For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr S Clifford, Finance & Capital Strategy

Local Councillor(s):

All

Senior Leadership Team:

S Cremer, Corporate Director, Section 151 Officer

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Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

1. The Dorset Council budget of £417.2 million for 2025/26 was approved by Full Council on Tuesday 11 February. A procurement forward plan report for 2025-2026 was approved by Cabinet on 26th March 2025. This paper follows on from the budget approval and seeks approval to launch additional procurement activity not covered in March 2025.

This paper has historically proceeded to Cabinet twice a year and its purpose is as follows:

For procurement activity, a Key Decision, which requires Cabinet prior approval is a proposed procurement with financial cost or saving to the council of £500k or more. This report provides notice of the additional planned / known procurement activities that will need Cabinet prior Key Decision approval for 2025-26. Commercial & Procurement have collaborated with

colleagues across the Directorates and reviewed the contract management system to establish an additional procurement programme for 2025-26. Procurement activity, within that programme, that are known / likely to exceed the £500k Key Decision threshold are set out in Appendix 1 for Cabinet's consideration.

Under Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (MSA), the Transparency in Supply Chains (TISC) provision requires all commercial organisations with an annual turnover of £36 million or more to publish a Modern Slavery Transparency Statement each year. This statement must also be uploaded to the government's Modern Slavery Statement Registry. This report provides the annual update of the Council's Modern Slavery Transparency Statement for the financial year 2024–2025.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 Cabinet is asked to consider the contents of this report in respect of proposed additional over £500k procurement activity for 2025-26 that are listed in Appendix 1 and the Modern Slavery Transparency Statement and to agree:

- to begin each of the procurement procedures listed in Appendix 1 (subject to an approved and available budget) to the Report.
- to delegate authority to the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder, after consultation with the relevant Executive Director to make the following decisions:

- 2.1..1 To agree final procurement documentation developed and refined within the broad scope of the procurement briefing notes (available on request)
- 2.1..2 To agree contract award subject to an approved and available budget (through a recommendation to award report and recorded in an Executive Decision form by the decision maker)
- 2.1..3 To publish the proposed Modern Slavery Transparency Statement for 2024-2025.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 Additional Procurement Forward Plan: Cabinet is required to approve all Key Decisions with financial consequences of £500k or more. It is good governance therefore to provide Cabinet with a summary of all proposed procurements, that individually are estimated to be a total value of £500k or more, prior to procurement procedures formally commencing.

- 3.2 Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder (in consultation with the relevant Executive Director) to agree final procurement documentation to be used for each of the procurements listed in Appendix 1. Those procurement documents will be developed and refined, based on the information and scope set out within each of the procurement briefing notes (prepared by service officer leads in advance of this report and available on request). The final procurement documents may include refinements to the scope and description, term or value of the contract to be procured, or the route to market, to take account of up-to-date information including relating to the Council's transformation programme.
- 3.3 Cabinet is asked to note that while delegation of authority is granted, it is not mandatory to exercise it, and there are circumstances where it might be prudent to bring a Key Decision outlined in this paper back to Cabinet; for example, sensitive decisions, high value decisions, or decisions which would be outside of the scope of the delegation or beyond the scope of the original briefing note informing this report.
- 3.4 For the avoidance of doubt, whoever holds the delegation has authority to make the final decision; whether to make a decision, or refer a matter back to Cabinet.
- 3.5 Whoever holds the delegation must exercise it in consultation with named consultees. They may also consult with other members such as informal cabinet or professional and service officers. The report enables Cabinet to identify whether any reports for procurement activities should be brought to Cabinet for specific executive decision, otherwise they will be dealt with under the delegation outlined.
- 3.6 Modern Slavery Transparency Statement: It is a statutory requirement for the Council to publish a Modern Slavery Transparency Statement on an annual basis.

4. **The report**

- 4.1 Additional Procurement Forward Plan: This report provides for Cabinet consideration, in Appendix 1, additional procurement activity within the 2025-2026 procurement programme (and onwards), which are known/likely to secure contracts exceeding the £500k threshold.
- 4.2 Modern Slavery Transparency Statement: The Modern Slavery Act was introduced in 2015 to provide victims of modern slavery with greater protections and police with greater powers. Section 54, The Transparency in Supply Chains Provision (TISC) of the MSA requires commercial entities with

an annual turnover of £36m or more to publish annually a Modern Slavery Transparency Statement and for this to be added to the government-run online Modern Slavery Statement Registry. Appendix 2 provides the proposed Statement for financial year 2024-2025 for Cabinet's consideration, as produced by a cross-directorate Modern Slavery Group, as a revision to the previous published Statement.

5. **Commercial and Procurement updates**

- 5.1 Much of the content from previous procurement updates remains applicable and will not be reiterated here. This paper focuses on key highlights and changes since the last report, ensuring relevance and avoiding.
- 5.2 Grants: The Commissioned Grants for Direct Community Benefit Policy was approved by Dorset Council's Cabinet on 24 June 2025. The policy introduced a structured and transparent framework for awarding grants as an alternative to traditional procurement, specifically where there is a direct community benefit. It aligns with national government grant standards and aims to streamline commissioning for the Voluntary and Community Sector while maintaining value for money and accountability. The route to market, whether via a grant or a contract, can shift depending on the nature of the funding relationship. The Government Functional Standard for Grants in addition to the policy provides guidance on when grants are appropriate, typically for funding activities that deliver public benefit without direct procurement. If the objectives or structure of the relationship change, the route may need to be reassessed and adjusted accordingly.
- 5.3 Our Future Council – Commercial and Procurement Considerations: Given the scale and ambition of the Our Future Council programme, the Commercial and Procurement team will continue to prompt stakeholders to build flexibility into new contracts, specifications (including opportunities for consolidation), and procurement notices. Legal changes must be clearly articulated within the original contract to ensure enforceability and compliance. Flexibility remains critically important as internal teams are expected to undergo change, which may necessitate contract variations, reallocation of responsibilities, or changes in service delivery. Consolidating spend (where appropriate) and reviewing contract scope will help manage financial pressures and improve value for money. The external environment also remains unpredictable, with evolving legislation, market volatility, and shifting community needs. Internally, organisational change adds further complexity. These factors reinforce the need for agile, resilient commercial arrangements that can adapt to both anticipated and unforeseen developments.
- 5.3.1 Contract Procedure Rules and Commercial Strategy Update: Following the UK's exit from the European Union and the introduction of new procurement

legislation, the Council's Contract Procedure Rules require an update to ensure alignment with the evolving legal framework. Similarly, the Commercial Strategy will be refreshed to reflect these changes and support the delivery of Our Future Council. Interim updates will be issued as the programme rolls out, ahead of a finalised strategy that incorporates legislative reform, organisational priorities, and lessons learned through implementation.

- 5.3.2 In line with the adopt-not-adapt principle of OFC, procurement decisions must continue to prioritise proportionality and value for money, ensuring that processes are streamlined, outcomes-focused, and aligned with national standards without unnecessary customisation.

- 5.4 Existing Contracts, Frameworks, and Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS) – Legal and Governance Considerations: Existing Contracts, Frameworks and DPS (excluding those for health services) continue to be governed by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR15) unless the Procurement Act 2023 applies. This includes modifications to existing contracts and call-offs under established Frameworks or DPS'.

- 5.4.1 Call-off contracts under Dorset Council Cabinet approved frameworks are generally not treated as separate key decisions. There is an implicit assumption that call-offs from Dorset let frameworks or DPS arrangements previously approved by Cabinet are permissible, provided they remain within the scope and value limits of the original approval. Where Dorset Council creates its own frameworks, Cabinet approval is typically required (to establish the framework at a particular value) due to the strategic and financial significance. In these cases, Cabinet approval has been cleared historically for the framework itself, and call-off contracts must be approved in line with the Council's Scheme of Delegation (SoD), based on contract value and impact.
- 5.4.2 For clarity, Dorset Council also calls off from external frameworks (e.g. YPO, CCS, ESPO), which it did not create and therefore they are included historically where relevant in appendix 1. For clarity, any task orders or statements of work under a particular call off contract are treated implicitly as delegated decisions. Finally, a service may request Cabinet approval to use an external framework, enabling it to operate under the same governance principles as Dorset Council-created frameworks.
- 5.4.3 Notwithstanding the above, exceptionally high-value or sensitive call-offs may warrant additional reporting or scrutiny, even if technically within delegation. Delegation principles have been outlined above and in previous Procurement Forward Plans. Service areas are reminded that they could choose to do so in certain circumstances, and they should liaise with the respective Director and Portfolio Lead around these matters. There is an implicit **understanding that**

once Cabinet approves Dorset Council created framework or DPS, officers may proceed with call-offs under that framework without returning to Cabinet, unless exceptional circumstances apply.

- 5.5 The Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 came in to force on 1st January 2024. Within these Regulations there are requirements to publish two reports annually under Regulations 25 and 26; these are an Annual Summary and Monitoring Requirements. The first reporting period being from 1st January 2024 until 31st March 2025, and the reporting having to be published no later than six months following the end of 2024/2025 financial year. As a pragmatic and proportionate way to meet these requirements of The Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 (PSR23), Commissioners from Public Health are working with the commercial and procurement business partner, in conjunction with other colleagues including the legal team, to develop the reporting which will be shared with the Public Health and Prevention Directorate Management Team to discuss with stakeholders, which will likely be published on the Public Health page on the Dorset Council website. Cabinet is invited to comment on whether they wish to receive the PSR23 reporting as part of future updates, or if they would prefer it to be presented separately given its statutory significance.
- 5.6 Procurement Act 2023 Implementation and Strategic Procurement Themes: The implementation of the Procurement Act 2023 (PA23) represents a significant cultural shift, requiring dedicated time and engagement from internal stakeholders. Alongside this, there are ongoing technology challenges and the complexity of operating under multiple legal regimes for the foreseeable future. The Council continues to adopt an iterative approach, learning lessons and embedding continuous improvement as part of the wider Our Future Council transformation programme. Procurement must remain proportionate and strategic balancing priorities such as SME¹ engagement, social value, and modern slavery while ensuring that the procurement process itself delivers value. This includes minimising administrative burdens, consolidating spend where appropriate, and maintaining flexibility in contracts to accommodate organisational restructuring and external uncertainties. These principles are essential in navigating financial constraints and delivering outcomes that support the Council's long-term objectives. The Commercial and Procurement team continues to engage with the Local Government Association (LGA), Crown Commercial Service (CCS), and relevant regional procurement networks, including through Dorset Council's paid membership in the Central

¹ 11. To qualify as an SME, legally an enterprise must have:

a. fewer than 250 staff; and

b. less than or equal to £44m in annual turnover or a balance sheet total of less than or equal to £38m. Source: [Supplementary information: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises definition \(HTML\) - GOV.UK](#)

Buying Consortium (CBC). These partnerships support shared learning, alignment with national guidance, and consistent implementation of the Procurement Act 2023. They also provide access to collaborative opportunities, market intelligence, and best practice that strengthen the Council's commercial capability. For example, the Council has chosen to adopt a set of procurement templates aligned with those used by several other councils participating in the regional forum, supporting consistency, shared learning, and efficient implementation.

During July and August 2025, the Government was consulting on further reforms to public procurement, with responses submitted by 5 September 2025. These proposals, likely to amend the Procurement Act 2023 include mandatory SME and VCSE spending targets, expanded use of direct awards, compulsory in-house delivery assessments, enhanced social value metrics, and exclusion criteria for poor payment practices. As an active stakeholder working with a diverse supplier base, including VCSEs and grant-funded partners, Dorset Council is well-positioned to contribute to this consultation. The Commercial and Procurement team responded through existing collaboration channels which provide regular opportunities to engage on national policy matters.

6. **Alternative options considered**

- 6.1 Procurement Forward Plan: An alternative approach is for Services to continue submitting separate and standalone Key Decision procurement reports to Cabinet for approval. They can do so, outside of the twice-yearly cycle and for decisions that they deem require additional scrutiny.
- 6.2 Modern Slavery: Relating to modern slavery risks and actions, Cabinet may wish to consider whether the issue of a modern slavery statement warrants a dedicated, standalone report, given its significance and cross-cutting implications.
- 6.3 No other alternative options have been identified at this stage. The proposed approach is considered the most appropriate to meet the Council's objectives, ensure compliance with legal and procurement requirements, and manage associated risks effectively. The decision reflects current operational needs and strategic priorities.

7. **Legal considerations**

- 7.1 The Council acknowledges its responsibilities under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and other relevant legislation, and Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and Procurement Act 2023. Dorset Council's Legal Services have been consulted to ensure that procurement practices, supplier engagement, and policy commitments are aligned with statutory duties and evolving case law. It

is recognised that some legislative areas remain untested, and the potential for legal challenge cannot be fully eliminated. The Council will continue to monitor legal developments and seek advice to mitigate risk and uphold compliance across its operations and supply chains.

8. **Financial implications**

8.1 Procurement Forward Plan: Service budgets incorporate funding required for the procurements set out in this report. The following will be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case / procurement project initiation and sourcing report and rationale for each procurement: how the contract and supplier(s) will be effectively managed to deliver saving targets that are incorporated into the financial plan; whether full funding is available in the budget provision, after savings have been accounted for (and incorporating break points and scale up / down provisions due to budget changes in future years); and the intended best approach to assess the contract performance and supplier relationship to manage expectations in respect of annual price increase amid a higher level of financial pressures that has not been experienced for many years.

8.2 Modern Slavery: No additional financial implications. This is a report in respect of a Statement which reflects on the Council's current position and outputs for financial year 2023-2024 regarding modern slavery.

9. **Natural environment, climate & ecology implications**

9.1 Procurement Forward Plan: To be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case / procurement project initiation and sourcing report and rationale for each procurement if applicable.

9.2 Modern Slavery: Not applicable. This is a report in respect of a Statement which reflects on the Council's current position and outputs for financial year 2024-2025 regarding modern slavery.

10. **Well-being and health implications**

10.1 Procurement Forward Plan: to be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case / procurement project initiation and sourcing report and rationale for each procurement if applicable.

10.2 Modern Slavery: Publishing annually a Modern Slavery Transparency Statement supports well-being and health implications within the Council's supply chains and wider communities, by ensuring transparency of the Council's policy and approach to responding to and mitigating the risk of Modern Slavery.

11. Other implications

- 11.1 None, although wider implications will be considered by the relevant project team.

12. Risk implications

- 12.1 Procurement Forward Plan: The level of risk is to be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case / procurement project initiation and sourcing report and rationale for each procurement. The purpose is to ensure that any potential issues are anticipated and mitigated to minimise their impact on the Council's objectives and operations. Effective risk management supports the Council in achieving its goals while ensuring compliance with regulations and maintaining financial stability. Financial pressures to the Council's budgets remain. All decisions and recommendations must therefore be mindful of the actual and potential impact of financial pressures, especially when committing future funding. Additionally, it is recognised that where legislation is untested and there will be legal challenges across the public sector. The Council has dedicated legal advice to minimise the risk although the risk cannot be eliminated. The possibility of facing such challenges can never be completely removed.

- 12.2 Modern Slavery: Dorset Council is committed to preventing modern slavery and human trafficking in all aspects of its operations and supply chains. We recognise our responsibility to uphold ethical standards and safeguard vulnerable individuals through robust procurement practices, staff training, and partnership working. This statement outlines our approach to identifying risks, promoting transparency, and ensuring compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

- HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:
- Current Risk: MEDIUM
- Residual Risk: LOW

13. Equalities

- 13.1 Procurement Forward Plan: To be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case / procurement project initiation and sourcing report and rationale for each procurement if applicable.
- 13.2 Modern Slavery: Publishing an annual Modern Slavery Transparency Statement is a positive policy in that it is setting out the Council's commitment

to opposing Modern Slavery and acting ethically with integrity and transparency.

14. **Appendices**

14.1 Appendix 1: 2025-26 Additional Procurement Forward Plan where the contract value is expected to exceed £500k.

14.2 Appendix 2: Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2024-2025.

15. **Background papers**

[Procurement Forward Look Cabinet Report MARCH 2025.pdf](#)

16. **Report sign-off**

16.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)