

Cabinet

19 May 2026

Procurement Pipeline Report – over £500k (2026-27)

For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr S Clifford, Finance & Capital Strategy

Local Councillor(s): N/A

Senior Leadership Team:

S Cremer, Director Resources (Section 152 Officer)

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Statutory Authority:

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

1. Executive summary

- (1) This report provides Cabinet with a forward view of planned / known procurement activity that is expected to exceed £500,000 and therefore requires Cabinet approval as a Key Decision before procurement activity is launched. The report has historically gone to Cabinet twice yearly to support good governance, transparency, and forward planning. As agreed with Commercial Board representatives and Democratic and Governance Services, the “Procurement Forward Plan Report” has been renamed to the “Procurement Pipeline Report” (to avoid confusion with the Democratic Services’ forward look and align with Procurement Act 2023 (PA23) terminology).
- (2) The attached Appendix 1 lists the pipeline items expected to exceed £500,000 (whether a new procurement or planned contract variation). The list is indicative and values, scope and timings may change as budgets and priorities change. The process has not changed, but this year the Cabinet appendix 1 now includes a short description of each contract to improve clarity and transparency. The Council also uses this forward look approach to support statutory transparency requirements under the Procurement Act

2023, including the need to publish a forward-looking pipeline notice for relevant contracts.

2. Recommendation(s)

Cabinet is asked to consider the contents of this report and agree:

- 2.1 To delegate authority to the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder, after consultation with the relevant Executive Director or Director, to:
- 2.2 To begin each of the procurement procedures (or variation) listed in Appendix 1 (subject to an approved and available budget); and
- 2.3 Final procurement documentation developed within the broad scope set out in the procurement briefing notes (available on request); and
- 2.4 Contract award (via a recommendation to award report / Executive Decision as appropriate) provided the tender outcome is within + 5% of the budget agreed with Finance when each project begins subject to agreement of the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Capital Strategy.
- 2.5 The Committee supports continued early engagement with Commercial & Procurement for higher-value and higher-risk activity. The Committee endorses the use of the pipeline as a key governance and assurance tool.

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

Delegation (where appropriate) supports timely delivery, while recognising that sensitive / high value / out-of-scope matters can still be brought back to Cabinet:

- 3.1 To provide visibility of upcoming procurement activity across the organisation.
- 3.2 To support better planning, prioritisation and use of Council resources.
- 3.3 To ensure compliance with: Procurement Act 2023 and Dorset Council Contract Procedure Rules.
- 3.4 To strengthen audit assurance and reduce unplanned or reactive procurement.

4. The report

- 4.1 Appendix 1 provides Cabinet with visibility of procurement activity expected to exceed £500,000, to support planning, transparency and assurance (including new procurements and variations). Commissioners complete supporting briefing notes for higher value/complex procurements (this information is relied upon to complete Appendix 1); these do not form part of the Cabinet paper but can be made available on request to support Cabinet and Portfolio Holders and are reviewed by the Cllr S Clifford, Finance & Capital Strategy and S Cremer, Resources Director, Section 151 Officer.
- 4.2 Procurement activity must not be launched until the necessary governance approvals are in place and the call-in period has expired, to ensure compliance with Democratic Services requirements. It does not replace: individual business cases or approved initiation documentation, formal approvals, or financial authorisation processes. Lower-value, routine procurements are managed through existing delegated arrangements and are not typically included unless a Key Decision is triggered. Initiation documentation usually includes: budget source confirmed, route to market and rationale, key risks and mitigations, social value / climate considerations (where relevant) and intended evaluation approach and timeline.

Procurement Act 2023

- 4.3 In addition to providing a forward view of planned procurement activity, this report also provides Cabinet with a general update on procurement activity across the Council, including the successful launch and award of contracts under the Procurement Act 2023. The Act represents a long-term change programme for the organisation and the market. Its requirements will be phased in over time as legacy contracts let under the previous Public Contracts Regulations 2015 expire and are replaced. This report therefore supports Cabinet oversight of both forward planning and the Council's transition to the new procurement regime.
- 4.4 The Procurement Act 2023 came into force in February 2025 and introduces a new framework for the way public sector procurement is planned, advertised, awarded and reported. For Dorset Council, this represents a significant but gradual change, rather than a single point of implementation. Legacy contracts let under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 will continue to operate until they expire, are extended, or are replaced. Over time, an increasing proportion of the Council's procurement activity will therefore be undertaken under the Procurement Act 2023. The Act places stronger expectations on up-front planning, transparency and reporting, including the publication of pipeline notices for higher value contracts. It also

introduces new processes and system requirements for both officers and suppliers. Cabinet is therefore asked to note that implementation of the Act is a long-term organisational change programme, requiring time for officers, members and the supplier market to fully adapt to the new arrangements.

- 4.5 As the new regime beds in, suppliers will also need to become familiar with revised processes, notices and compliance requirements. During the transition period, a mixed market will exist where some contracts are governed by legacy arrangements and others by the new Act. The Council is therefore taking a proportionate and pragmatic approach, supporting suppliers through clear documentation, early market engagement and consistent messaging, while ensuring statutory compliance is maintained.

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- 4.6 The procurement pipeline also supports the Council's wider OFC programme, in particular the ambition to work more effectively as one Council. Increased visibility of planned procurement activity enables earlier collaboration across services, identification of opportunities to consolidate contracts, and more strategic use of the Council's buying power. Over time, this will support a simpler, more consistent contract landscape and reduce avoidable duplication across directorates and improve manageability and support better value from the Council's collective purchasing power.
- 4.7 Dorset Council's procurement forward plan has consistently been presented as an indicative and flexible tool, rather than a fixed or exhaustive list. Previous Cabinet reports have made clear that the pipeline reflects the position at a point in time, based on known service, commissioning and transformation plans, and that it may be necessary to bring additional or amended procurement activity to Cabinet as priorities, funding or service delivery models evolve. This approach recognises the dynamic environment in which the Council operates and allows procurement activity to respond proportionately to emerging requirements, whilst maintaining appropriate Cabinet oversight of Key Decisions.
- 4.8 Over the past year, the Commercial & Procurement service has continued to adapt to a period of significant change, including the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023, internal transformation programmes and evolving organisational priorities. The team has supported services through this transition by embedding new processes, delivering targeted training and guidance, and ensuring that statutory and constitutional requirements are met while maintaining service delivery. This has included building internal capability, supporting suppliers as they adapt to new requirements, and responding flexibly to emerging pressures. Cabinet is asked to note the

progress made in strengthening the Council's commercial capability during this period of sustained change.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 An alternative approach is for services to continue submitting separate standalone Key Decision reports to Cabinet for each procurement, outside of the twice-yearly cycle. Not maintaining a pipeline would: reduce transparency, increase procurement risk and limit early engagement opportunities.

6. Legal considerations

- 6.1 The Council's procurement activity operates within the Council's Constitution (including Contract Procedure Rules and the Scheme of Delegation) and relevant procurement legislation. The Procurement Act 2023 introduced enhanced expectations around: forward transparency, pipeline notices. Maintaining a clear pipeline supports compliance with statutory duties and defensible decision-making. Individual procurements will continue to receive legal advice where required.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 No procurement will be formally commenced until the budget has been confirmed and signed off by the relevant Finance Business Partner as part of the Council's approval and assurance process. Final awarded contracts may include additional provisions for extensions or optional periods, subject to: ongoing budget availability, financial approval processes, opportunities for service consolidation or value-for-money improvements over the life of the contract. Service budgets incorporate (the "up to") funding required for the procurements set out in this report. Detailed affordability and value for money are considered through each project's business case and procurement documentation. The pipeline supports better financial management by enabling early identification of cost pressures, supporting value for money decisions and reducing unplanned extensions or emergency procurements.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 8.1 To be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case and procurement documentation, where applicable.

9. Well-being and health implications

- 9.1 To be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case and procurement documentation, where applicable.

10. Other implications

10.1 N/A

11. Risk implications

11.1 The key risk is that pipeline estimates may change as budgets and service priorities change; Appendix 1 is therefore indicative. The level of risk associated with each procurement is considered and managed by the relevant project team as part of the business case, procurement project initiation and sourcing rationale. This includes the identification of delivery, commercial, financial and legal risks, alongside appropriate mitigations, to ensure that potential issues are anticipated and addressed in a proportionate manner. This approach supports informed decision-making, protects the Council's objectives and operations, and ensures compliance with relevant legislation and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

11.2 The wider financial context remains challenging and continues to place pressure on Council budgets. All procurement decisions and recommendations must therefore be mindful of both the immediate and longer-term financial implications, particularly where commitments extend over multiple years or rely on uncertain funding streams.

11.3 In addition, the Council continues to operate within a changing and, in some areas, untested legislative landscape as the Procurement Act 2023 is implemented across the public sector. It is recognised that this may give rise to legal challenge, as markets and authorities adapt to new requirements. The Council takes dedicated legal advice throughout the procurement process to minimise risk and support defensible decision-making. While such risks can be mitigated, they cannot be eliminated entirely and are managed within the Council's established governance and assurance framework.

HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: MEDIUM

Residual Risk: LOW

12. Equalities

12.1 To be considered by the relevant project team as part of the business case and procurement documentation, where applicable

13. Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1: May 2026 Procurement Pipeline where the contract value is expected to exceed £500,000.

14. Background papers

- 14.1 Procurement Forward Look Cabinet Report March and September 2025 (previous versions).

15. Report sign-off

- 15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Assurance and Governance Director (Monitoring Officer), the Resources Director (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).