

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service

Contract Standing Orders

1. Purpose

These Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) are written in the context of the Procurement Regulations 2024, the Procurement Act 2023 and the National Procurement Policy Statement which all public procurement activity must pay due regard to and in accordance with the requirements of Section 135 of the Local Government Act and the Local Government Transparency Act 2015.

The CSOs will form part of the Fire Authority's Constitutional documents, when adopted (anticipated to be taken to December 2025 Fire Authority with other constitutional changes). As such, they form part of the governance assurance framework that all employees must follow.

The purpose of these Contract Standing Orders is to provide a structure within which commercial decisions are made and implemented and which ensures that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority:

- Meets its legal obligations under Procurement law
- Delivers against Service Objectives
- Uses resources efficiently and effectively
- Procures fit for purpose goods, services and works
- Safeguards its reputation from any implications/perceptions of dishonesty and corruption
- Ensures commercial decisions are fair, equitable and transparent for the taxpayer
- Improves the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of the taxpayers of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

These Contract Standing Orders cover all spend with external suppliers. Please also ensure that the Contract Standing Orders Guidance document is also reviewed.

2. Procurement Thresholds

Summary table of procurement thresholds required with short definition and examples where applicable/required.

Procurement thresholds: --

Title	Value [excluding vat]	Requirements*	Exemption Form (only required if the stated procurement route is not followed)
<p>Out of scope, Below Threshold</p> <p>Local management</p>	<p>Up to £10k excluding VAT</p>	<p>Direct award - Quotes where available</p> <p>Confirm “No conflict of Interest”</p> <p>Confirm “Delivers Value for Money”</p> <p>Input rationale for purchase.</p> <p>Contract to be signed by Head of Group or above for contracts less than 3 years. If Over 3 years Contracts are signed by a director or Sealed by The Monitoring Officer.</p>	<p>Not required</p>
<p>Out of scope, Below Threshold</p>	<p>£10k to £25k excluding VAT</p>	<p>3 quotes required [commercial team are notified but do not have to approve these</p>	<p>Required if 3 quotes are not available.</p> <p>Commercial team review and approve.</p>

<p>Low Value Procurement</p>		<p>requisitions (Requisitions are requests to order within the finance system)]</p> <p>Contracts signed by a director or Sealed by the Monitoring Officer.</p>	<p>Annual reporting to Fire Authority</p> <p>Head of Finance or above to approve.</p>
<p>Out of scope, Below Threshold</p> <p>Medium Value Procurement</p>	<p>Supplies and Services £25k to £75k exclusive of VAT E.g., Software licensing and support contracts</p> <p>Works £25k - £100K excluding VAT Construction e.g., Minor building works.</p>	<p>Submit “Request to Procure” in good time prior to contract start date</p> <p>Commercial team to advise on the best route to market and review supplier terms and conditions.</p> <p>Requisitions (Requisition are a request to order within the finance system) go through Commercial team for authorisation prior to Head of Group authorization.</p> <p>Contracts signed by a director or Sealed by The Monitoring Officer.</p>	<p>Required if procurement route is not followed.</p> <p>Commercial Team review and recommend approval or refusal.</p> <p>S.151 Officer to approve.</p>
<p>Out of Scope, Below Threshold</p>	<p>Supplies & Services £75k to £179k exc. VAT (£214,904 inc. VAT) E.g., Software</p>	<p>Liaise with Commercial team at least 6 months before contract start date.</p>	<p>Required if procurement route is not followed.</p>

<p>High Value Procurement</p>	<p>licensing and support contracts</p> <p>Works £100k - £4,477m exc. VAT (£5,372,609 inc. VAT) Construction e.g., Refurbishment of a Fire Station.</p> <p>Light Touch Contracts £75k £553k exc. VAT (£663,540 inc. VAT). Directly relating to individuals or groups of people, rarely used by The Fire Service e.g., service paying for an individual’s legal or private medical fees.</p>	<p>Submit “Request to Procure”</p> <p>Requisitions (Requisitions are requests to order within the finance system) go through Commercial team for authorisation prior to Section.151 Officer approval.</p> <p>Contracts signed by a director or Sealed by The Monitoring Officer.</p>	<p>Commercial Team review and recommend approval or refusal.</p> <p>S.151 Officer and The Monitoring Officer</p> <p>Any spend above officer delegation limit must be approved by The Fire Authority, unless already approved in a Fire Authority approved capital or revenue budget. Fire Authority approval report and minute must accompany the exemption form.</p>
<p>In scope, Above Threshold</p> <p>(Procurement Act values are inclusive of any VAT, the exclusive of VAT values are based on a UK VAT registered supplier</p>	<p>Supplies & Services above £179k exc. VAT (£214,904 inc. VAT) E.g., Software licensing and support contracts</p> <p>Works above £4,477k exc. VAT (£5,372,609 inc. VAT) Construction e.g.,</p>	<p>Full Commercial process required</p> <p>Liaise with Commercial team at least 12 months before contract start date. Submit “Request to Procure.”</p> <p>Requisitions (Requisitions are</p>	<p>Exemptions will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>The Commercial Team review and recommend approval or refusal and add details of appropriate next steps.</p> <p>Exemptions will require Fire Authority</p>

and are provided as a guide only)	<p>Refurbishment of a Fire Station.</p> <p>Light Touch Contracts above £553k exc. VAT (£663,540 inc. VAT). Directly relating to individuals or groups of people, rarely used by the Fire Service e.g., service paying for an individual’s legal or private medical fees.</p>	<p>requests to order within the finance system) go through Commercial team for authorisation prior to Section.151 Officer approval</p> <p>Contracts signed by a director or Sealed by The Monitoring Officer.</p>	<p>approval, on the recommendation of the s151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and Head of Paid Service.</p> <p>Commercial team to be notified to issue the required Transparency notices.</p>
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NB – For contracts, the costs are those of the life of a contract including any optional extension(s), they are not the annual charge, it is the total cost which is relevant to these thresholds. Utility-related costs are excluded from the above.

3. Breaches

Any breaches of the Contract Standing Orders will be reported to The Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer, which may result in a formal investigation where appropriate.

Any officer who suspects any misconduct or corruption (perceived or otherwise) must report to the s151 Officer or Monitoring Officer.

4. Exclusions

The CSOs do not apply to the following requirements that are governed by separate policies and guidelines:

- Contracts for the purchase or lease of land
- Contracts for permanent or fixed term employment

- For arbitration or conciliation
- For the appointment of expert witnesses in legal proceedings or legal counsel
- Works or orders placed with utility companies (e.g., re-routing pipe work)
- A declared emergency as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and authorised by the Chief Executive or a nominated officer in their absence

5. Commercial function

The purpose of the Commercial function is to:

- Assist purchasing managers to comply with the law, and to buy goods services at the best price possible
- Provide a commercial support service that delivers fit for purpose goods and services whilst achieving best value;
- Be part of a national community which works together to promote collaborative opportunities where it makes commercial sense to do so in the public sector;
- Support the local economy and SME's by procuring below threshold procurements locally where possible, with a focus on small and medium enterprises;
- To ensure contractual obligations are being achieved and work with contractors to seek out continuous improvement opportunities and value for money by managing supplier relationships and the quality of contract provision;
- Ensure that public money is spent effectively, meeting legislation and local rules;
- To forward plan procurement activity;
- To maintain an up-to-date contract register;

6. Procuring Manager's Responsibilities

The Procuring Manager must ensure that:

- Commercial Team is informed and involved at the earliest opportunity for all commercial activity over £25k, in particular pre-market engagement and commissioning phase
- any conflict (or potential conflict) of interest is declared, recorded and managed from the outset;
- there is adequate budget to undertake the proposed procurement or commercial activity
- Authority to spend has been obtained

- that adequate funding is in place for the whole life cost where this can be reasonably assessed;
- Where advised by commercial/Director or statutory Officer prepare a business case or strategy for consideration/approval;
- requirements are identified and communicated to the commercial team
- appropriate documentation is produced to support commercial activity, as required (e.g., request to procure, and where appropriate a project plan, risk register, terms of reference, decision logs, specific evaluation criteria, business case, waiver request);
- all activities undertaken by them are compliant with this Standing Order
- user requirements are adequately defined, in accordance with the Procurement Regulations and other associated applicable regulations, identifying minimum standards and desirable elements;
- compliance with relevant legal obligations relating to the goods, services or works to be procured for example but not limited to, environmental / health and safety; sustainability; social value; transparency; data protection
- they support the drafting of the tender specifications and requirements and where appropriate contract terms and conditions
- they contribute to development of the high procurement strategy and risk assessment;
- they be involved throughout the life cycle of the procurement plan, selection and award phase stage, implementation/onboarding, review and on-going supplier and contract management;
- technical expertise is provided and input to tender evaluation fairly and transparently;
- technical recommendations in any tender assessment report are detailed providing evidence if necessary;
- orders are created in a timely and appropriate manner in the Authority's finance system.
- Stakeholders are not dealing directly with bidders or potential bidders before or during the Procurement process without the full involvement of and/or approval by the Category Manager or Head of Commercial and Business Support and ensure that notes of all discussions are taken for transparency requirements.

7. Routes to market

1. For above threshold procurements, a suitable framework or dynamic market will be sourced.
2. Where a framework or dynamic market is not available, a competitive process (formal tender route) will be undertaken.

For routes 1 and 2 above, this will be done in conjunction with the Commercial team.

8. Purchase Orders

Purchases of goods, works and services wherever possible must be accompanied by a purchase order, an exception to this would be in relation to but not limited to ongoing utilities and business rates charges. Purchase Orders are the Requisitions within the finance system once approved.

9. Exemptions (Waivers)

All exemption/waiver requests must be made in accordance with the Procurement threshold table above and submitted using the relevant forms (F11) ([Blank Exemption.docx](#))

The circumstances in which a waiver may be considered for contracts not subject to the Procurement Regulations, include but not limited to:-

- the work, supply or service is required as a matter of urgency and a delay would be likely to lead to financial loss, personal injury or damage to property;
- where the supply is for parts for existing products, or where the terms of supply of equipment require that maintenance must be undertaken by a specified provider;
- where the work is of a specialist nature, the skill of the contractor is of primary importance, and the supply market has been tested and found to be limited;
- where the supply is for maintenance to existing IT equipment or software including enhancements to current software, which can only be performed by the licensed developer or owner of the system; or

All exemption requests must be fully documented and submitted in advance of any purchase or purchase order being made.

10. Calculating the Contract Value

The contract value shall be the genuine pre-estimate of the value of the entire contract excluding Value Added Tax (including proposed extensions and future options)

There must be no artificial splitting of a contract to avoid the application of the provisions of the in-scope procurement or the financial values contained within these Contract Standing Orders.

For all advertised tenders VAT must be included in the calculations but will exclude VAT in the Tender Notices. The VAT to be applied will be calculated at the appropriate rates by the Commercial team with support from the Finance Team during the ITT drafting.

The Authority confirms it is an End User for the purposes of the VAT Act 1994

11. Procurement lifecycle

Plan for any procurement above £25k, where advertised

This is the first stage where the strategy is developed which will include:

- the proposed route to market
- Updating of the pipeline
- Commencing an understanding of the market along with high level requirements
- Request to Procure where applicable and approvals to proceed This is the stage where procurement pipeline notices will be published and any planned procurement notices where relevant, by the Commercial team.

Define

- The need to procure and options will be identified
- Pre procurement activities will be defined such as approach to premarket engagement, proposed route to market, key documents and requirements drafted along with proposed evaluation criteria, panel members. Appropriate sign off to proceed with the identified route to market.

Procure (see further detail below re Tendering and Evaluation)

Finalise procurement documentation and publish relevant notices.

This stage is broken down into the following areas: -

- Pre Market Engagement
- Procurement stages (dependent on route to market)
- valuation /Assessment stages
- Contract Award Notification
- Contract Details Notification or publication of redacted contract.

Manage

This is the final stage of the Commercial Lifecycle and will be proportionate to the value and route to market but will typically include

- Receipt of goods and services
- Issue of payment and
- Management of contracts relevant to value and route to market to ensure successful delivery of contractual obligations
- Undertake permissible contract modifications
- Closure and termination of Contract
- Exit from Contract

Notices in relation to contract management for applicable contracts will be placed which will include: -

- Payment Notices
- Contract Performance Notices
- Performance against KPI's where applicable
- Contract Modification Notices (where applicable)
- Converted Contract Notices where applicable
- Termination Notices

Tendering Stage and Tender Evaluation

All tendering procedures (including obtaining quotes), from planning to contract award and signature, shall be undertaken in a manner to ensure: -

- Sufficient time is given to plan and run the process (including pre procurement activities which may be required)
- Equal opportunity and equal treatment of participants
- Openness and transparency
- Probity
- Outcomes that deliver ethical trading, sustainability and any related targets, efficiency and value for money.

For above threshold (In-scope) procurements, the route to market will be designed according to the goods or services being procured. Where the competitive flexible procedure is considered the most appropriate route to market, the commercial category lead will work with key stakeholders to design the procurement, which must be followed with no variations.

A Conflicts assessment will be conducted at the start of any procurement activity and recorded in the relevant notice (detailed further in this document).

Invitations to quote or tender will be issued electronically through the Authority's eProcurement portal (Delta) in accordance with the requirements of the Invitation to Tender (ITT) and will be published on the Central Digital Platform (for in-scope procurements).

Tenders received shall be kept secure electronically unopened within a sealed mailbox on the e-tendering system until the time and date specified for the opening.

No tenders or quotes received after the time and date specified for its opening shall be accepted or considered by the Authority unless agreed in writing by the Head of Commercial and senior stakeholder for that procurement and only in exceptional circumstances will this be permissible.

Evaluations

For any procurement that has involved the requesting of quotes or tenders, a category lead will lead and chair the evaluation process, in conjunction with the Procuring Manager, to ensure that procurement principles and objectives have been met and decisions fully documented.

Tenders shall be opened electronically by a Commercial Category Lead on the eProcurement system providing a full audit trail of all activity undertaken and checked against conditions of participation (where applicable).

All quotes and tenders shall be evaluated in accordance with evaluation criteria set out in the invitations to tender/quote and always in the presence of a Commercial Category Lead.

Where an evaluation panel is formed, a Commercial Team chair and subject matter expert will lead the panel.

Training on undertaking evaluations and assessment of bids will be provided to all panel members by the Commercial Category Lead prior to evaluations taking place.

A further conflicts assessment undertaken at evaluation stage.

Award

At this stage, all assessments have been undertaken, and a preferred supplier has been identified. There may be approvals required from an internal governance perspective.

Candidates will be advised of the outcome, and the method for this will be determined by the route to market. For above threshold (In-Scope) Procurements Assessment Summaries will be finalised and distributed and Contract Award Notice will be placed on the Central Digital Platform, initiating the mandatory 8 working day standstill period. At the conclusion of the standstill, providing no issues or challenges have been raised, the contract can be formally awarded and a Contract Details Notice or if applicable a redacted contract will be published on the Central Digital Platform.

Contract Management

Our contracts register shows all known contracts let by the Authority, and where available, the estimated contract value.

As contracts are refreshed, relevant data will be published under the Transparency Section on the Authority's website. ([Transparency](#))

At the onboarding stage of the contract / implementation stage relevant due diligence check and contract onboarding documentation will be finalised. Following this, at least annual contract review meetings will be held and documented.

Contract Performance Notices will be published on the Central Digital Platform for relevant contracts along with performance against published Key Performance Indicators where applicable.

Extensions and variations to contracts

An extension to the duration of an existing contract can only be granted if specifically provided for by that contract and for up to the period (or periods) specified. All potential variations or extensions must be discussed with the Commercial team to ensure these are permitted within the scope of the original procurement and contract to ensure compliance with the legislation.

Extensions and other variations to existing contracts such as the inclusion of additional works or services must be notified to the Commercial team and will only be permissible if:

- Made in accordance with any statutory restrictions and any specific terms of the contract;
- Made in accordance with the provisions of the Procurement Act 2024 for In-Scope Procurements.
 - Any extension or other variation must take into account:
 - Probity
 - Value for money principles.
 - For contracts subject to The Procurement Act, any extension or other variation must meet the conditions set out in the Act in addition to the more general requirements set out above.
 - For all contracts which are not subject to the Procurement Act (i.e. those let before 24 February 2025), no variation (nor the cumulative effect of more than one variation) of a contract may artificially modify the subject matter of a contract beyond its original specification nor increase its annual value by more than 20% of the Contractor's original tender bid.
 - Subject to the nature of changes which may be required to the contracts and framework agreements, certain variations may be lawfully sought. Stakeholders

should contact the Commercial team to obtain advice on the lawfulness of the changes required.

Where any permissible modifications/extensions are made to a contract during its term, a Contract Modification Notice will be placed on the Central Digital Platform.

Contract Termination

If at any stage the contract is terminated, including at its natural conclusion, a Contract Termination Notice will be published on the Central Digital Platform.

12. Record keeping

Records of procurement activities will be maintained in line with the Authority's Publication and Retention Scheme and Requirements of Act, including but not limited to Request to Procure, Regulation 98 of the Act (record keeping), and Transparency notices detailed above.

13. Notices

Throughout the lifecycle of the procurement (pre procurement through to termination of contract a number of notices must be placed at each stage of the process these include (where applicable)

Plan Stage

- Pipeline Notice
- Planned Procurement Notice
- Pre Market Engagement Notice

Procurement Stage

- Tender Notice
- Transparency Notice (if applicable)
- Below Threshold Tender Notice (if applicable)
- Tender Modification Notice (if applicable)

Award Stage

- Contract Award Notice or
- Contract Details Notice

- Procurement Termination Notice
- Below Threshold Contract Details Notice

Contract Implementation

- Contract Performance Notice/ KPI (if applicable)
- Contract Change Notice
- Payment Compliance Notice
- Contract Payment Notice

End of Contract

- Contract Termination Notice

Additional Notices (if applicable)

- Dynamic Market Notice
- Evaluation Transparency Notice
- Poor Performance
- Debarment Notices

14. Lists and registers

Before embarking on a procurement activity the *Authority (The Commercial team)* is required to check the Central Digital Platform Debarment Register and should a supplier be registered on this for a mandatory ground they will not be permitted to take part in the tender opportunity until their debarment has been lifted, however if they are on the list for a discretionary ground the authority will maintain the discretion to exclude or disregard.

The Authority must also check the register for excluded and excludable suppliers and in some cases those with a mandatory exclusion ground may be excluded from participation and excludable suppliers may be excluded from participation following an assessment of the grounds for the mandatory or discretionary exclusion.

Prior to undertaking any procurement activity, the Commercial team will undertake a Conflicts Assessment and details recorded on an internal Conflicts Register for each procurement.

15. Frameworks and Collaborations

Where it is considered advantageous to make use of the contracts or framework agreements awarded by other Public Sector Organisations, for example, Crown Commercial Services (CCS),

or other Fire Authorities, the commercial team and key stakeholder must ensure that they offer value for money.

A contract may be awarded to another Contracting Authority (e.g. Local Authority, Fire and Rescue Service) where the contract establishes or implements a co-operation between the participating contracting authorities with the aim of ensuring that the public services they have to perform are provided with a view to achieving objectives they have in common and the implementation of that co-operation is governed solely by considerations relating to the public interest. Advice should be sought from the Head of Commercial and Business Support before using any such contracts or agreements.

Other collaboration routes, such as a s13 or s16 arrangement with another Fire and Rescue Service, or a shared service arrangement under s113 Local Government Act 1972 will not fall within the scope of procurement law. For such arrangements, please seek guidance from the Monitoring Officer.

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