

WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

1. Question by Councillor Philip Daniel to the Lead Member for Resources

Recent comment in the media has highlighted concerns about transparency and accountability of procurement processes in the public sector. This has arisen particularly in the context of the Covid-19 response – but not only there.

Will the Lead Member please:

1. Advise on steps taken to assure transparency and accountability in the Council's contracting processes for Covid 19 PPE and other related supplies;
2. Advise on the steps taken to implement the recommended, as well as the obligatory, portions of the Local Government Transparency Code with respect to procurement contract transparency and accountability; and
3. Indicate that the Council will be prepared to sign onto the Open Contracting Principles (as the Scottish Government has done, and as the UK Government did in 2016) and advise Members what steps that the Council must take to adhere to these principles?

Answer by the Lead Member for Resources

1. PPE has naturally been a major focus for Procurement this year. In terms of transparency and accountability, all companies that have offered PPE to the Council have been thoroughly vetted in terms of their ability to deliver safe and effective PPE for the Council to use and the methods of payment employed.

Decisions to source from specific suppliers were based on their ability to supply the necessary evidence that their stock adhered to the required standards (as advised by Central Government).

In addition, as we learned more about the pricing and quality standards involved, we have used this information to employ active benchmarking so that the Council receives good value for money for the PPE stocks that it has held. An advantage of having this information across the three Orbis partners (Surrey and Brighton and Hove) was that we have actively sought information to ensure we were better placed to obtain suitable levels of PPE stock.

Further information on specific orders and quantities is available in report form as required.

2. The Procurement Team have produced the [Procurement Transparency Reporting Review](#) to compare the obligatory and the recommended portions of the Local Government Transparency Code. This examines the current procedures against the recommended ones and details where the levels are exceeded and what, if any, action is required to bring our transparency reporting up to recommended levels.

The new ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) Project in East Sussex known as MBOS (management of back office systems) will provide updated technology that will allow many of these recommendations to be implemented.

Some of the recommendations would have costs associated with them due to the manual nature of the work involved and as such the review seeks to outline these costs. As always, we seek to balance the commercial nature of each project against the value for money responsibility that sits with us as a Council.

3. The response to question 2 identifies the transparency principles that the Council is working to and the balance that needs to be achieved between providing detailed transparent data and the resources and systems required to achieve this. The Council uses guidance from UK Government to Local Authorities and the Local Government Association to guide our practice around the publication of contracting information as well as benchmarking with other Local Authorities around best practice approaches.