

Progressive Procurement Strategy 2020/27

Working together for a fairer Islington



| Version | Date | Approved |
|---------|----------------|----------|
| FINAL | 2 October 2020 | |

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Preface

Making Islington fairer

Our vision

Many of our local communities face deep social and economic challenges, driven by deprivation and inequality. The Covid-19 crisis has made things even more challenging, particularly for those residents who were already struggling in the face of deep inequalities in our society.

Islington's Fairness Commission in 2010-2012 established our approach to tackle inequality and poverty in the borough. The Commission's vision was to make Islington a fairer place and somewhere where everyone, whatever their background, has the same opportunity to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life.

This vision is even more pertinent today, as we seek to recover from the crisis and build back better. Boosting and locking-in wealth for all of our residents must be at the heart of rebuilding a Fairer Islington.

Community wealth building and procurement

A key enabler of the council's Fairness agenda is the Community Wealth Building Programme. This long term programme, that began mobilising in May 2020, is focused on reducing economic inequality, sharing wealth and increasing opportunity by creating a sustainable and inclusive local economy, underpinned by a strong community asset base and a progressive procurement approach.

It is essential that the council's spending, both direct and with suppliers, has the maximum positive impact for Islington people, especially the most disadvantaged. We want to make sure as much as possible is spent within Islington, and that the council's purchasing decisions support Islington people through creating employment, skills training and other opportunities. We also want to support and enable Islington businesses, particularly small businesses, successfully tender for council contracts. This is what we mean by **progressive procurement**.

The council spends £650million with almost 6,000 providers. Much of this spend is pre-determined and the council acts as an agent to pass the money on to other organisations. However, about half is directly commissioned by the council and it therefore has influence over how the money is spent and how it can contribute to community wealth building.

Our approach

People are often surprised that we concern ourselves with community wealth building in Islington. After all, Islington's national media image is a caricature of the wealthy metropolitan elite's main residence. Too many of our residents face economic and social hardship, driven by austerity and national economic policies, and further worsened by Covid-19.

Islington's 2010 Fairness Commission reported that there are 'two Islingtons'. Whilst we have some of the wealthiest people in the country living in the borough, we also have the fourth highest rate of child poverty. Levels of income inequality in Islington are higher than the London median, with incomes for the richest 10% of households likely to be over 10 times that of the poorest 10%.

In the wake of the Covid-19 crisis, which has seen unprecedented social and economic upheaval, we must deploy the resources of our council to support those in our communities who need help the most. More than ever, we need to make sure that every pound spent by this council reaps maximum value and benefit for local residents and businesses. Taking a progressive procurement approach is how we intend to do this.

This approach is to fundamentally tackle inequalities – the two 'Islingtons' – and help to build community wealth – a shared prosperity which is locally rooted and resilient. We intend to do this in partnership with our vibrant and dynamic community and voluntary sector, and through closer collaboration with key local partners that also have significant procurement spend and diverse supply chains – Islington's **anchor institutions**.

We believe that we should seek to deliver services **in-house**, wherever we reasonably can. Providing services in-house gives us better control of services, more flexibility around how we want to deliver services, and better protection for those delivering our key services. Ultimately allowing us to maximise the level of wealth that is locked-in for our residents and local businesses.

We accept that not everything can be delivered in-house. When we need external provision, we will seek to work with providers who share our values and are excited about a shared ambition to deliver more social value. A joint ambition to deliver high quality, value for money services, but in a manner that also delivers more social value and makes the borough fairer.

For Islington, social value means:

- including explicit outcomes, particularly more jobs, apprenticeships and work experience opportunities, in all procurement activity, with a weighting of at least 20% of the overall scoring and evaluation
- working with supply partners who pay their staff a living wage and actively develop and support their career progression

- ensuring our definition of social value embraces our response to the climate emergency, embedding targets to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030 across all relevant contracts
- developing and enabling strong local supply chains of businesses likely to support local employment and retain wealth locally, including locally-owned SMEs and employee-owned businesses
- leveraging the council's positive practice to influence and collaborate with key local partners that also possess significant purchasing power to maximise social value delivery.

We know that we are a major economic player in the borough, and want to make sure that our spending power has the best impact for local people. Establishing an inclusive economy that is focussed on equality, social justice, sustainability and prosperity for all, harnessing our economic power so that it changes local people's lives for the better. Progressive procurement is at the heart of these ambitions.

Impact of COVID-19

It is impossible to introduce a new seven-year strategy without considering the impact COVID-19. An impact that has been unprecedented and transformational, changing the day-to-day lives of our community in both shorter and longer terms. This has been an incredibly challenging period and our local communities, council staff and elected members, and local partners have responded in remarkable ways.

There have been numerous examples of community wealth building and progressive procurement in action:

- Mutual Aid Groups rapidly mobilising to meet basic needs of residents, working with council across a range of services
- Purchasing over £3,500 fruit and veg from Junction Road businesses, as part of food parcels
- Commissioning a local business support provider, to develop a series of business adaptation webinars
- Supporting 'buy local' through a borough-wide directory, and promoting eco-friendly deliveries
- Offering interview preparation and CV support for care sector candidates
- Reviewing social value 'asks' in affordable workspace operator appointment process and existing contracts, to meet needs of new context

- Sourcing sandwiches from borough suppliers
- Collaborating with local shops on supply of personal protection equipment.

Thousands of residents have been supported through food packages, fuel top-ups, financial support and other advice and support.

The social and economic impact of Covid-19 will be far reaching. The extent of the challenges faced by our residents and businesses are only just becoming understood. This means we will need to continue to invest time and resource into helping residents get back to work, to support our local economy and to deliver our Fairer Together programme, among other services, to mitigate the longer term impact on our community.

Rebuilding Islington

Community wealth building, and key supporting strategies such as progressive procurement, are a vital part of the council's rebuilding efforts.

Successfully implementing the Progressive Procurement Strategy 2020/27 requires us to work with local partners and supply partners in a flexible, more agile way, recognising the common set of challenges we all face across our different operating environments.

We believe that the challenges of rebuilding our community makes the case for a progressive procurement model with social value at its heart even more compelling. We also believe that there are many supply partners including local SMEs that share these values and our ambition. In return, we offer a commitment to transparency and agile working.

We also need to be bold and consider creative solutions that deliver increased wealth for our residents, help us toward a zero carbon future, and help deliver a Fairer Islington. We are therefore proud to launch the council's new Progressive Procurement Strategy 2020/27 as a key step towards a better future for our residents and local businesses.



Cllr Asima Shaikh, Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs (left)

Cllr Satnam Gill OBE, Executive Member for Finance and Performance (right)

Introduction

Our strategic approach

The strategy is built around three themes:

- Active leadership
- Progressive supply partnerships
- Delivering community benefits.

Our ambition and approach for each theme is set-out in the following pages.

For each theme, we have also identified a number of commitments that the council is seeking to deliver across the strategy's lifetime. Each of these commitments will be supported by detailed action plans and associated performance and success measures.

Theme A

Active leadership

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Theme A: Active leadership

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Islington is committed to unlocking the power of progressive procurement in support of an inclusive and socially just local economy. Using the economic leverage of the council, we intend to promote a progressive economic agenda that delivers for the many, not for the few.

The council has the ambition to actively shape and promote a local economy that is underpinned by the principles of equality, fairness, and economic and social justice.

Islington's Fairness Commission in 2010 set out our approach to tackle inequality and poverty in the borough. The Commission's vision was to make Islington a fairer place and somewhere where everyone, whatever their background, has the same opportunity to reach their potential and enjoy a good quality of life.

We know that the council plays a major role in the local economy. Every year, we spend more than half a billion pounds on contracted services. We also employ over 4,500 people. We own and lease over 500 non-residential properties, as well as making financial investments.

Understanding our economic power is central to our community wealth building agenda – and ensuring that we maximise its potential to help our residents achieve their full potential.

Our goal is to be a progressive procurement pioneer, to shape a supply chain that builds community wealth and supports an inclusive economy which enhances the quality of life of our most disadvantaged residents.

As we emerge from the Covid-19 crisis, we need to mobilise for a recovery of the local economy that works for all, and a progressive procurement approach will be central to that.

Showing leadership is essential to make Islington fairer. The council has a strong record in making Islington fairer over the course of the last Procurement Strategy. Despite 70% funding cuts, working with partners we have, for example:

- Delivered more council homes than in the last five years
- Maintained services for the community such as libraries and care for older people
- Helped over 4,000 people into work including apprenticeships
- Kept up weekly waste and recycling collections
- Became the joint first local authority to win accreditation as a Living Wage Employer in 2012 and require our contractors pay workers at least the London Living Wage
- Been the first council to sign up to the UNISON Ethical Care Charter, setting minimum standards to protect the dignity and quality of life for people who need homecare in Islington
- In-sourced council services – bringing back education, housing repairs and waste management services back in house
- Provided free school meals – one of the few councils in England to offer free school meals for all nursery and primary pupils in its schools
- Helped a thousand of people out of fuel poverty and energy useage improvements.

However, to make Islington fairer, there is more that we can and will do.

Through this progressive procurement strategy, we want to continue to encourage and amplify the award of work, supply and service contracts to companies and professionals that perform public contracts with a business model based on decent wages, stable employment, environmental sustainability and ethical behaviour, and to promote democratic participation and drive social innovation.

We want our supply partners to share the vision of a new public procurement strategy that includes the achievement of social value goals as core structural elements, not add-ons.

Social impact needs to be integrated into the entire contract cycle and feature in the process of selecting contractors that offer works, services and supplies with the aim of finding a balance between quality and price while, at the same time, fostering the values and practices of a socially responsible business model that enhance the council's objectives on a fairer place for all.

A1. A member-led authority

Showing active leadership in procurement and supply has to start from the top, which means with councillors. Councillors are democratically elected representatives and deeply understand the challenges faced by our residents and local communities.

Councillors shape the decisions taken for the people of Islington, and where the council chooses to invest its resources and efforts. Engaging councillors is fundamental to how services are delivered – promoting an economy that uses its resources more effectively, that is greener and more inclusive.

Executive members provide political leadership, strategic direction and challenge for the council. Executive members have individual portfolio responsibilities and work closely with service delivery departments. The Executive meet to:

- Take decisions and encourage integrated working across the council
- Provide a focus on political and administrative priorities and strategy
- Demonstrate leadership and governance, overseeing and scrutinising outcomes.

Executive Members have and will maintain portfolio responsibility for commissioning, procurement, contract management and supply chain activity. Given the importance of the progressive procurement strategy to the council's Fairness agenda, the **Executive Member for Finance and Performance** and **Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs** will take joint responsibility. They will be actively involved in relevant oversight boards and providing challenge on contract outcomes, including social value. They will work closely with other Executive Members responsible for commissioning and procurement across the council's different service areas.

Ensuring councillors can demonstrate active leadership

For councillors to be able to perform their roles effectively, they need access to information. We will be improving systems and access to timely and accurate information, including reports and contract management analysis. This will particularly help with major projects and service commissioning, so councillors are able to understand they are being completed robustly and social value and value for money objectives are being delivered.

Councillors will have access to training and development programmes to ensure they are fully equipped and engaged with commissioning, procurement and contract management decision making as well as ongoing monitoring of social value delivery. Enabling them to give clear, early direction on what matters to residents, businesses and services to officers when developing commissioning proposals for procurement.

The Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee will continue to receive regular updates on commissioning and procurement activity, including data on value for money and social value outcomes. Providing an opportunity to review, challenge and strengthen achievement of these key outcomes. Helping to increase delivery of affordable housing, support more people into jobs, improve community safety, improve life chances for young people, help people with the cost of living and protect essential council services.

While the council has a duty to publish spend with a value of more than £5,000, finding information on individual contracts can be a demanding process. By making the contracts register easier to navigate, this will make scrutiny easier, as well as reducing the amount of officer time required to extract data. The contracts register plays an integral part in planning commissioning, taking into account issues that need to be considered to ensure the contracts perform better in future, while also making sure there is a long lead-in time to empower officers to prepare, consult and consider the most appropriate steps to take.

Higher quality information informs better decisions and improves results. With more in-depth information available on the contracts register, not just on the contracts themselves, but also additional issues, such as social value, anyone scrutinising the register – from elected members to members of the public to the Commissioning and Procurement Board – will see the real benefits to the borough that can be delivered as part of effective partnership working and excellent contract management.

A2. Engaging senior managers

Senior managers are integral to the delivery of this strategy. Their approach to progressive procurement, strategic commissioning and innovation is key to its success. Their practical understanding of the council's ambition will translate it from concept to business as usual.

Senior managers in the council is already making great advances in their approach to strategic commissioning, and leveraging the council's financial power for additional impact. As we do more progressive procurement, we will ensure they are equipped with the training and skills they need to support them in delivering the council's aspirations.

Through the council's governance and operational decision-making processes, managers can use their service knowledge, experience and professional expertise to have a broader impact on commissioning, procurement, contract management and supply chain issues. This, in turn, improves strategic planning, coordination and decision making as well as improving service delivery across the council.

Adding value by engaging senior managers

Knowledge gained through the day to day delivery of their services, as well as their responsibility for delivering strategic priorities, means that senior managers have a practical understanding of the council's ambition in relation to social value and how it relates to commissioning, procurement and contract management.

By supporting their understanding of procurement issues through training, information and resources, as well as day to day support and advice, managers will be in a stronger position to deliver in this regard.

As a result of ensuring senior managers are fully aware of their responsibilities in delivering this strategy, they will be in a stronger position to use the contract management process to harness supplier innovation within their respective disciplines, ensuring better outcomes for projects through clear outcomes.

Better service knowledge leads to better results

Through their early involvement, senior managers can exert greater influence and ensure the specific needs of their service are reflected in the commissioning, procurement, contract management and supply chain processes. By working closely with relevant procurement, social value, legal and financial professionals to get advice on projects and have access to guidance in a variety of formats, they will get the best results.

Their close links to staff, service users, and stakeholders mean that senior managers are able to quickly identify what works well and what can be improved, as well as ensuring the council's governance procedures are adhered to. This service and strategic level knowledge means that senior managers are well-placed to deliver on their responsibility to take this information and effect change on commissioning, procurement and contract management matters within their respective service areas.

By embedding commissioning and procurement in their service plans and including in them contracts which may need to be commissioned, re-commissioned and/or de-commissioned, senior managers will draw clear links between the responsibilities of their service and how they contribute to delivery of the council's objectives.

A3. Collaborative leadership with partners

Working together, working better together

The council has for a long time long worked creatively with its partners – across the public sector, as well as the community, voluntary and social enterprise sectors – to find new and innovative ways of improving services. Building on existing examples of designing and implementing solutions outside of normal ways of delivery, the council will continue to work well, cooperatively and efficiently with its partners.

The council's partners typically share a number of common objectives, in particular through needing to support a common set of residents, service users or customers. This emphasises the benefits of collaborative leadership and the importance of joint working where this can be shown to deliver benefit. This might include sharing budgets and other resources to achieve joint outcomes, adopting common routes to the market, or working to align objectives to find ways to bring governance requirements together.

Often, the council's partners have skills, resources, relationships, knowledge and expertise that the council does not. By working closely, the council will pool these resources to find new ways of working. Where the council's partners perform well, the council will learn from them – both formally and informally.

When delivering similar services, it makes sense to put our resources together. The council will look for ways to work with partners across the region to do this. By sharing both resources and best practice, the council will be able to improve efficiency and service delivery at the same time.

Creating an anchor institution network

The council wishes to further strengthen these relationships and the potential for collaborative leadership through the development of an anchor institution network. Anchor institutions are strategically important, 'sticky' organisations that can help shape local economies through employment, purchasing and assets.

We will leverage the network to work with local public and potentially private sector partners to further enhance social value delivery across the borough, through our combined purchasing power and ability to influence supply chains.

A4. Collaborative leadership with strategic suppliers

Using supplier expertise to deliver service improvement

The council's suppliers do more than provide services. By working more closely with these suppliers, the council can improve performance, reduce costs, and mitigate risks. The council recognises the potential for innovation suppliers bring, and harness this.

From their work with other councils and service providers, suppliers have information and expertise that can improve services. Where we can, the council will share more information from suppliers on performance, costs, social value and other strategic priorities for service planning and improvement.

The council wants to work with supply partners who share our values and ambitions. We believe common goals strengthen the benefits that collaborative leadership can bring.

Diversity of experience brings a diversity of expertise

Suppliers come in all shapes and sizes, from multinational corporations to small, local businesses, some directly commissioned and others working as sub-contractors. Each performs a valuable role and brings with them their own unique approach. The council will work to capitalise on the added value a diverse supply chain can bring. We believe a supplier does not necessarily need to be large to be strategic.

Zero carbon is a clear example of the need for collaborative leadership. The council is clear on its ambitions and the role progressive procurement has to play. But is equally clear that it doesn't have all the answers and wants to actively engage with partners to develop sustainable and affordable solutions to help tackle the challenges faced in delivering a zero carbon future.

Service providers are in the best position to talk about the contracts they deliver. As a result, they should be prepared to attend the council's scrutiny meetings to discuss their performance. The council will make these meetings a valuable two-way process, examining performance while listening and learning from service providers and service users alike.

A5. User and resident-led procurement strategy

We ultimately procure goods and services for the benefit of our residents. In some cases they universally benefit all residents, in other cases they benefit residents with specific needs. In both cases, it is vital that we allow residents/service users to help shape the way we commission services and test the effectiveness of these services in meeting the objectives established for each service commissioning activity.

In addition to delivering high quality, value for money services, our progressive procurement strategy also seeks to deliver tangible social value from our commissioned services. It is therefore equally important that residents are actively engaged in assessing the impact of social value delivery on their perceived and actual community wealth.

Throughout the lifetime of this strategy, we will ensure that service users are actively involved in designing and monitoring delivery of commissioned services and associated social value outcomes.

A6. Commitments

Given the importance of the progressive procurement strategy to the council's Fairness agenda, the **Executive Members for Finance and Performance** and **Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs** will take joint responsibility. They will be actively involved in relevant oversight boards and providing challenge on contract outcomes, including social value. They will work closely with other Executive Members responsible for commissioning and procurement across the council's different service areas.

- ✓ we will be improving systems and access to timely and accurate information, including reports and contract management analysis
- ✓ councillors will have access to training and development programmes to ensure they are fully equipped and engaged with commissioning, procurement and contract management decision making as well as ongoing monitoring of social value delivery
- ✓ by making the contracts register easier to navigate, this will make scrutiny easier, as well as reducing the amount of officer time required to extract data
- ✓ the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee will continue to receive regular updates on commissioning and procurement activity, including data on value for money and social value outcomes
- ✓ further strengthening the potential for collaborative leadership and collective purchasing power, through the development of an anchor institution network
- ✓ where data protection rules allow for this, the council will share more information from suppliers on performance, costs, social value and other strategic priorities for service planning and improvement
- ✓ service providers are in the best position to talk about the contracts they deliver. As a result, they should be prepared to attend the council's scrutiny meetings to discuss their performance. The council will make these meetings a valuable two-way process, examining performance while listening and learning from service providers and service users alike
- ✓ throughout the lifetime of this strategy, we will ensure that service users are actively involved in designing and monitoring delivery of commissioned services and associated social value outcomes.

Theme B

Progressive supply partnerships

Building long term partnerships with like-minded suppliers that deliver high quality services and social value outcomes for our residents and offer value for money.

Theme B: Progressive supply partnerships

Building long term partnerships with like-minded suppliers that deliver high quality services and social value outcomes for our residents and offer value for money

The council has clearly established its strategic preference for directly delivering services, as far as practicable and affordable. We believe this gives us better control of services, more flexibility around how we want to deliver services, and better protection for those delivering our key services. Ultimately helping us to maximise the level of wealth that is 'locked-in' for our residents and local businesses.

But we also recognise that direct delivery is not always the most appropriate and affordable way to deliver services and make a contribution to strategic objectives. In these circumstances, we want to build long term and progressive partnerships with suppliers, based on shared values and ambitions for the borough and delivering high quality service and social value outcomes for our residents, as well as delivering value for money.

The council firmly believes that this mixed economy of provision is the right strategic approach, but is equally firm that it needs to actively invest in both forms of provision. We are clear that where we choose to externally commission services, these arrangements should in no way become 'poor relations' to directly delivered services. Commissioning, procurement, contract management and supply chain management must therefore be active, two-way, and highly effective processes. Particularly in the context of the council's strategic priority of using these processes to support the delivery of social value outcomes and secure value for money.

There are many reasons for poor contract and service delivery performance, and it can occur even where partnerships are strong. Effective risk management and taking action early is therefore key to any successful partnership. Putting in place strong contingency plans will also reduce downtime if a provider should be unable to deliver for any reason. This forward-planning approach, where valuable information is collected best practice shared, results in a high level of preparedness that both improves services while making contracts more efficient. It also helps ensure that we continue to strengthen partnerships with our providers.

Modern slavery

The council was one of the first in the country to sign the charter against modern day slavery, but signing a charter is not enough. Work needs to be undertaken to ensure those contracts where a risk of slavery has been identified are scrutinised and officers can be certain this harmful practice is eradicated.

The council prepares annual reports on tackling modern day slavery, keeping the pressure on the council and its partners to remain vigilant and never to show signs of complacency, in spite of the considerable leadership the council has shown.

B1. Exploring opportunities

Working more closely to identify opportunities for excellence

Staff in areas seeking to externally commission services will work closely with corporate procurement function to identify and shape opportunities for external commissioning, working together to creatively challenge the way the council acquires goods, works and services on major contracts.

Representatives with differing service priorities from across the council will be given the opportunity to bring their specialist knowledge to the tendering process to ensure contracts have much greater impact on strategic or service objectives. The delivery of social value will form an essential early stage of the opportunity shaping process.

Embedding procurement with category management

The council will enhance its category management approach at the centre of community wealth building. This approach will pull together similar types (or 'categories') of spend from across the council. Category management will support delivery of corporate ambitions, such as fairness, social value and achieving a more inclusive economy. In addition, we will maximise opportunities for improvement, consolidation, savings and efficiency.

A central function will bring commercial acumen to help focus the efforts of the council with its procurement activity. Senior business partners to the council in category management, will advise on improvements in our procurement. An in-depth and developed understanding of categories will better manage risk and opportunities. Driven by improved insight and spend mapping, they will also recommend changes in the approach to supply.

We want procurement with category management to make the maximum positive impact, acting for the benefit of our residents, service users and local businesses. About half of council spending is directly commissioned. We want our spending to contribute to community wealth building. The central function will help commissioning to increase spend in borough and support our residents to gain employment, skills and training with resilient supply chains.

Planning ahead to bring out the best in potential partners

Improving forward planning and making better use of intelligence will ensure tenders are as effective and efficient as possible. With greater procurement expertise, officers will consider levels of demand, service needs and strategic objectives through the use of options appraisals, in order to ensure outcomes are achieved and savings are delivered.

Forward planning will ensure potential partners, especially local SMEs, have time to plan, create consortia and fully prepare for the tender process.

Shaping new sources of supply

The council is highly ambitious. In many areas its plans are clear, but in other areas it is recognised that new solutions are required. Particularly as the council needs to deliver on these ambitions during a time of unprecedented uncertainty. Two examples demonstrate the challenge and opportunity. In both cases, the council needs to change to respond to this challenge but will also need to work with partners:

- delivering a zero carbon borough is both immensely important and immensely challenging. Part of the challenge is delivering new skills and capabilities at scale to retrofit our housing stock and operational buildings and to electrify our vehicle fleet
- supporting our residents to live independently at home for longer is vital. What is equally important is delivering this objective through a highly skilled workforce with strong career progression opportunities and paid at a living wage.

In some cases, the council will seek to tackle these challenges directly, changing its operating model appropriately. But the council also believes progressive supply partnerships are vital in identifying and implementing creative solutions to the challenges it faces.

Supply relationships and assurance

The council is a major economic player in the borough. We want to make sure that our spending power has the best impact for local people. We will need to be bold and creative to deliver increased wealth for our residents. We want a Fairer Islington that also moves us toward a zero carbon future. We want continuous improvement in our supply chain.

Cross-organisational supply insights and analytics are essential to us. This means we need to understand our own actions and use of suppliers. We also want to improve access to our supply information. We will seek to improve effective measurement and monitoring of our suppliers and our supply outcomes, with a constant focus on increasing efficiency.

Progressive supply partnerships share our values and corporate ambitions, and are core to achievement of community wealth building. Supplier relationship management will be embedded at our centre. We will look for opportunities to enhance and improve our supply relationships on our way towards a better future for our residents and local businesses.

Highlighting the benefits for the borough

Ultimately, the creative and collaborative exploration of opportunities is about demonstrating external commissioning can have real benefits for the borough. Clear performance dashboards, highlighting supply chain and social value benefits, will be shared widely, with the council's partners and leadership where appropriate.

High levels of performance in commissioning, contract delivery and supply chain management lead to excellence across the council. The integral role that procurement expertise plays in this regard will be highlighted as evidence of continuous improvement at the service level, and for the benefits to the borough as a whole.

B2. Managing contracts and relationships

Keeping things simple to improve results

Communication will be as straightforward and free from jargon as possible, in order to support supply partners in their work with the council. Clear explanations will be available, while providers will have clear ways to communicate with the council and ask questions when necessary.

Some contracts require a high level of input, with high levels of competition, while others are more specialist or local and, as such, a light touch regime can be applied. When planning procurement activity, the light touch regime will be reflected as much as possible to ensure resources are used as effectively and efficiently as possible by simplifying the process wherever possible.

Learning from experience to drive excellence

Getting the best out of contract management and building effective relationships with suppliers is of the utmost importance. A relationship support team will facilitate this by developing procedures, providing guidance and delivering support to departments, while also aiding two-way communication to ensure best practice is shared across services.

Shared knowledge will be used to improve contract performance. By learning from officers' experience of commissioning, procuring and managing contracts, this extensive expertise – both formal and informal – can be used to improve every aspect of the process. Knowledge gained from one contract will drive forward planning and control costs on others.

Improving performance, accountability and scrutiny through accessibility

Making the contracts register more accessible makes the council more transparent and accountable. Information for contracts with a value of more than £5,000 will be added to the register in a format that can be easily scrutinised, while also ensuring commercially confidential or personal data is not accessible.

Higher quality information will make commissioning more efficient and effective. Information on actions outstanding and upcoming renewals will be available on the contracts register to ensure contract managers and commissioners have sufficient time to prepare. Increased lead-in times enable officers to make informed decisions on the best course of action for their contracts. By reviewing and interpreting information from the Contract Register, services will identify opportunities to improve efficiency and service delivery.

Improved contract knowledge and a higher quality of information on the contracts register will make measuring contract performance more straightforward. By recording agreed social value outcomes, and allocating and recording responsibility, the register facilitates monitoring and reporting progress, as well as escalating cases when necessary through the Commissioning and Procurement Board.

Recording information on the contracts register over the lifetime of contracts and beyond enables services and those scrutinising and reviewing contracts to make informed decisions. Contract changes, variations and extensions will be added to the register, having been approved by the appropriate boards where necessary, to ensure information is up to date and accurate.

By enhancing supply chain skills and behaviours, contract managers will be empowered to exert greater influence over the contracts for which they are responsible. When considering the best approach for the council, officers will look for the most appropriate mechanism for delivering against the needs of the service and the council's objectives.

Supporting providers through more effective contract management

Recognising that standards and/or delivery can fail for a variety of reasons, close working relationships with providers – especially smaller businesses – are essential. Improved relationships enable contract managers to identify performance issues and work with providers to resolve them, building in contingency plans and improvement plans to reduce the need for more formal measures.

One provider might work with multiple services across the council, or with some of the council's local partners. Where possible, officers will work with these providers to ensure work is not duplicated and is instead streamlined for improved efficiency.

When the council's needs change over the life of a contract, the Supply Chain Practitioners Group will consider employing benchmarking tools. By identifying when an agreement is accessed by additional services the group will take steps to build these new needs into the new contract when it is re-commissioned.

Social value delivery

Delivering social value, whether through jobs, training or other contributions, will form a core part of all commissioned services. We need to ensure contract and relationship management processes are in place to support our supply partners to deliver on these objectives. The council will establish new processes with supporting capacity to ensure we track the delivery of social value commitments throughout the contract lifecycle. Where there are legitimate reasons to review commitments, this is undertaken in a structured and transparent manner that ensure we still deliver outcomes.

Building capacity through learning and development

To ensure all relevant staff are informed and knowledgeable on contract management and supplier relationship, training is essential. Contract managers will receive learning and development support, while senior managers will ensure best practice information is shared at a strategic level so that they can better support their staff to manage relationships.

Contract management is not an add-on, but is instead an integral part of officers' work. Where contract management and supplier relationship management accounts for more than 20% of their role, this will be recognised as a core competency. All staff who meet this requirement will receive specialist training to support them in delivering this responsibility.

Central support for supplier relationship management will be formed. The central support will help provide increased assurance, engagement and training, support business continuity measures and help make a meaningful difference to community wealth building by maximising use of available data.

Further emphasis will be placed on supply measures which help to achieve a more inclusive economy approach.

End violence at work charter

The council is committed to the aspirations of the End Violence at Work Charter.

We will:

- actively encourage businesses to embrace and sign up to the Charter
- ask contractors to sign to the Charter who are tendering for contracts led by the council
- add to our corporate Contract Management guidance information about the Charter and encouraging existing providers to sign up.

B3. Managing strategic risk

Reducing risk through effective contingency planning

Through the use of risk assessments, services will identify vulnerable areas of the supply chain and put in place contingency plans to mitigate any risk. By sharing these plans with relevant stakeholders and reporting back on progress, stakeholder confidence will be improved.

No company is too big to fail. In periods of economic uncertainty, it is essential to identify those suppliers the council relies on, and to put mechanisms in place to monitor their financial health. The council itself must remain alert to major events of all types, from legislative change to natural disasters, and be prepared to respond to these.

By maintaining a comprehensive understanding of the impact of such events on high value and high risk contracts, the council will ensure contingency plans are in place.

Combatting fraud with strong internal partnerships

Robust systems are in place to target financial loss and fraud. Through the development of close working relationships between assurance services and the council's audit and fraud service, increased support is available to services. For every stage of the procurement process, from commissioning to procurement to contract management, guidance will be available.

Mandate fraud has been identified nationally as an issue increasing in prevalence and severity. The council will take clear steps to address this issue, both through preparing guidance and providing advice on how to mitigate the risk, as well as practical action. Such actions might include embedding robust processes for verifying new suppliers and/or changes to existing arrangements, which will be overseen by senior officers, with annual audits will take place to ensure consistency in supplier integrity.

Checks and reports for both contractors and the council

Compliance checks are an important part of the procurement process, and these checks will be extended into contract management. To maintain confidence in the financial health of contractors and ensure they can maintain delivery over the life of the contract, where appropriate, reporting measures and compliance checks will be required.

In order to support services in maintaining compliance checks, audit teams will work to monitor compliance levels. Specific emphasis will be placed on challenge, resolution and escalation, to ensure services receive the right support in making sure the contracts they manage are delivered without interruption and the contractors they work with continue to deliver.

Maintaining transparency and inspiring confidence in the council's processes, and through the use of analytical software, contracts and spend will be published in accordance with legislation. This robust framework for monitoring compliance, and publishing relevant data, demonstrates the council's commitment to confirming that all providers work within the law.

Protecting people through policy and process

The council has a longstanding commitment to eradicating modern slavery, and welcomes any opportunity to build on this. Identifying contracts where a risk of modern slavery exists or might take place is a priority. With a strong process in place at the council's Commissioning and Procurement Board, actions to mitigate risk will be implemented, with a robust process for monitoring and flagging future occurrence.

Maintaining pressure on any and all providers that might employ such practices, the council has adopted a clear strategy and approach to modern slavery management. By reporting progress to members on an annual basis and identifying clear approaches to dealing with modern slavery, involving statutory partners where appropriate, the council will show leadership on this serious issue.

Increased sharing of data with providers brings with it an increased risk of data breaches. Building on its longstanding processes, the council will identify contracts where sensitive or confidential data is shared and work to ensure data protection is embedded in the contract. By engaging with providers, the council will mitigate risk and work with providers to maintain high levels of information security.

B4. Commitments

- ✓ staff in areas seeking to externally commission services will work closely with the corporate procurement function to identify and shape opportunities for external commissioning, working together to creatively challenge the way the council acquires goods, works and services
- ✓ progressive supply partnerships are vital in identifying and implementing creative solutions to the challenges the council faces, and it will seek to actively engage with potential partners where an external solution is the best way forward
- ✓ communication, during procurement and delivery phases, will be as straightforward and free from jargon as possible, in order to support supply partners in their work with the council
- ✓ the contracts register will be made more user friendly, be transparent and visible to all, and kept up to date
- ✓ the council will establish new contract and relationship management processes, with supporting capacity, to ensure we support, track and therefore maximise the delivery of social value commitments throughout the contract lifecycle
- ✓ central functions to have accountable senior advisory professionals for driving corporate ambitions and achieving efficiencies required through appropriate staffing strategies
- ✓ contract management is not an add-on, but is instead an integral part of officers' work. Where contract management and supplier relationship management accounts for more than 20% of their role, this will be recognised as a core competency. All staff who meet this requirement will receive specialist training to support them in delivering this responsibility
- ✓ through the use of risk assessments, services will identify vulnerable areas of the supply chain and put in place contingency plans to mitigate any risk. By sharing these plans with relevant stakeholders and reporting back on progress, stakeholder confidence will be improved
- ✓ the council will enhance its effectiveness in tackling mandate fraud, as well as seeking to strengthen wider fraud and compliance processes on an ongoing basis.

Theme C

Achieving community benefits

Through active leadership and progressive supply partnerships, the council's supply chain needs to help maximise the economic, social and environmental benefits to communities.

Theme C: Achieving community benefits

Through active leadership and progressive supply partnerships, the council's supply chain needs to help maximise economic, social and environmental benefits for its local communities.

Islington's Fairness Commission in 2011 described the borough as a place of stark inequalities, with acute deprivation and extreme wealth often found side by side on the same street:

- large numbers of local residents struggle to access jobs with 21% economically inactive and 10% claiming out-of-work benefits compared to the London average of 7%
- over half of lone parents are not in employment and 93% are female
- men who live in the worst off areas are expected to live 8 fewer years than men living in the best off areas in the borough
- 40.4% of children in Islington are growing up in poverty, the fifth highest proportion of children living in poverty in London.

Whilst work since 2011 by the council and its partners has begun to tackle this inequality, there is more to do. Moreover, although evidence and trends are still emerging in relation to the impact of the Covid-19, it is clear that its impact has been both far-reaching and severe, particularly amongst those residents who already struggled in the face of deep inequalities in our system.

In parallel, the council has declared a climate emergency and is establishing a strategy to deliver a zero carbon borough by 2030.

In these contexts, social value has to be about ensuring that every penny we spend finds its way to enable our communities and economy to thrive, whilst sustaining the physical and social environment. More than ever, we need to strive for an inclusive economy that enables our most disadvantaged residents to get into training, good quality work and entrepreneurship.

We intend to lead from the front, getting results which inspire neighbouring boroughs and anchor institutions to partner with us so that we have a shared approach to an inclusive economy and shared vision to deliver community wealth-building. Working to join-up supply chains, where practical, affordable and clearly proven to enhance value.

For the council and our progressive supply partners, we see an opportunity to promote a cultural change within the public sector, shifting it towards more innovative practices and attaining economic and technical efficiency. It is essential that social value is embedded in the financial planning cycle of the council and, where they are supportive and in many cases already doing, its anchor partners. All should benefit:

- for the local economy, we are seeking to support innovative businesses and SMEs that promote the council's values on social and environmental matters. In turn, this will drive inclusive growth, as they build off of access to the local public market
- for residents, we fundamentally believe this will improve public services by including innovative goods or services that better and more efficiently serve the needs of all residents, particularly those who are most disadvantaged
- for society, this will promote social justice and tackle inequalities in Islington and wider sub-region.

Working with our partners and contractors, an inclusive economy underpinned by social value generation will be delivered through a focus on:

- tackling unemployment and facilitate the development of residents' skills, especially those with the greatest barriers to employment
- promoting 'good' jobs for local residents – embedding London Living Wage, maximising employee access to entitlements such as childcare and encourage suppliers to source labour from within Islington
- enabling young people to gain understanding, experience and networks in the diverse world of work
- promoting expenditure within a locally-rooted (sub-regional) and broadly owned supply chain, including social enterprises, co-operatives, micro and small businesses
- encouraging participation and citizen engagement through resident participation in the design and delivery of services
- driving sustainability through our supply chain to reduce waste, particularly single use plastic and food waste, develop a circular economy and support our goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 for example limiting energy consumption
- building the capacity and sustainability of the voluntary and community sector
- enabling innovation through incentives and partnerships.

C1. Embedding social value

Pioneering social value, planning for the future

It is essential that social value is embedded in the financial planning and commissioning cycle of the council, rooted in an organisational culture of being social value pioneers. We will put processes in place to ensure the council and its progressive supply partners demonstrably deliver on this ambition.

This includes providing managers across the organisation the opportunity for training and/or appropriate resources (such as guidance and templates) in order to be able to properly prompt, understand, consider and implement social value in the work they oversee.

The Inclusive Economy service – alongside an emerging network of corporate social value champions – provides support so that the requirements are built into grants, goods, works and services, providing expertise where necessary. Subsequently this will be challenged at the highest levels within the organisation, being considered by officers and where appropriate members in all procurement key decisions.

In addition, we will actively engage with managers across the organisation, to help prioritise social value, and shape the offer from contractors and facilitate beneficial relationships with the voluntary/community sector.

Building better support networks to build better social value capacity

To further embed this across the organisation, a social value champion network is being established. This group will share best practice on social value with support from an officer and oversight on feedback from Commissioning and Procurement Board for continuous feedback and improvements to support resources. They will be responsible for a library of resources with links to case studies (internal and external) and lessons learnt to support commissioners, to understand examples of social value in practice.

Through appropriate planning in the commissioning cycle, social value will be properly tailored to the size and scope of the contract with clear guidance available and the council having actively supported social value through the provision of training to managers.

To support this, Executive Members will attend social value sessions with staff and actively see it as part of their remit to encourage and expand delivery of social value across commissioning and procurement activity, including consideration of early intervention practices.

Procurement project plans include a gateway which ensures social value is a required step on the plan and forms part of the standard requirements to be addressed in procurement strategies and business cases.

Continuous improvement internally and externally sits at the heart of social value with appropriate action and reviews of delivery, including consideration of benchmarking and case law, sharing learning with committees, partners and providers as appropriate.

C2. Social value delivery framework

To demonstrate our commitment to social value and progressive procurement, all tenders will include social value in specifications, terms and/or evaluation criteria and weighted as at least 20% as part of tender scoring. Only in exceptional circumstances will a minimum of 5% (per National Strategy) be accepted and commissioners will be required to provide a robust justification.

Central to the success of a borough-wide approach, is a systemic approach to social value delivery as part of contract management processes. We are currently piloting a set of KPIs which measure and monetise social value in a set of contracts. This will enable us to determine the financial proxy value of the social value achieved.

The framework will seek to track and measure social value delivery across a number of themes. Apart from mandatory ethical standards, not all of these thematic areas will be expected to be delivered from every contract. But potential supply partners will be expected to think creatively and ambitiously about how they contribute to the council's social value objectives.

Economic value

To embed a culture of active contract management and delivery of social value commitments, we will establish a social value delivery framework based on measurable targets including:

- number of local people employed on the contract
- number and percentage of local people offered training and apprenticeships
- number and percentage of council's target groups with employment or training opportunities on the contract
- amount and percentage of spending with sub-regional sub-contractors
- amount and percentage of spending with local small and medium businesses
- amount and percentage of spending with social enterprises and co-operatives.

Over the next 12 months we will develop a framework through which to measure our progress in these areas. In particular, to measure performance against two strategic objectives:

- % increase in the employment of Islington residents, including those with the greatest barriers to work i.e. long term unemployed; people with disabilities; BAME; and women
- % increase in expenditure with Islington-based businesses, and on a sub-regional level, including social enterprises and co-operatives.

Environmental value

We will also develop a series of environmental value targets aligned with the council's zero carbon strategy, including green economy objectives.

Opportunities to build sustainability into contracts are endless, but finding the right approach requires strong contract knowledge and good environmental awareness. Embracing the council's commitment to being net carbon neutral by 2030, officers will work with providers to identify contract-specific approaches towards achieving this.

Only by being conscious of the impact of the council's purchasing power, can the council move closer to minimising its environmental impact. By embracing and transitioning to a Circular Economy approach, the council will consider the lifespan of the products and materials it purchases, as well as their longevity, ease of repair or re-use and finally their recycling potential. Our suppliers must support us in achieving this, by ensuring their business practices, services they provide or products they manufacture and/or source meet this requirement.

The council recognises its role as a leader in sustainable practice and has made a commitment to reduce our use of unnecessary single-use plastic. We will require our suppliers to show the ways in which they are reducing and eliminating single-use plastic from their products, supply chains and their business practices.

Food waste and food sustainability will be considered in contracts whenever possible and appropriate. Those providers supplying food as part of their contracts must ensure information is available on where food and ingredients have been sourced from and can demonstrate that their environmental impact has been considered and reduced wherever possible. Suppliers will also be required to outline how levels of food waste will be reduced, for example by using intelligence to ensure waste is kept to a minimum, or by putting in place plans for responsibly disposing of food waste.

Safer urban driving, supporting sustainable transport

Contractors and sub-contractors represent the council. This applies when they are delivering contracts on the council's behalf, but also while out and about in the borough. It is the responsibility of commissioning officers to enforce the council's Safer Urban Driving scheme, keeping the borough's roads safe, while also improving community relations. With an increase in cycling and walking in the borough, individual contracts and key decisions alike will need to specifically consider of more sustainable forms of transport, as well as vulnerable road users.

Keeping vulnerable road users safe is a matter of great importance. If more people feel safe cycling and walking, more people will use these more sustainable forms of transport. While not requiring actions that might disadvantage smaller or more local suppliers, the council will consider imposing standards on providers to improve standards for cyclist and pedestrian safety.

Supporting mental and physical wellbeing

Our providers work on the council's behalf, and because of this, contractors play an important role in delivering Making Every Contract Count (MECC). By improving suppliers' knowledge of the council's services and priorities, contractors can help signpost residents to help them get the support they need quickly, easily and as early as possible.

Improved knowledge of the council's services and priorities supports better signposting. In order to champion the public health benefits of public health initiatives, such as exercise, diet and reducing or stopping smoking and drinking, commissioned services will be expected to consider the benefits that their intervention can deliver.

In addition to more general health and wellbeing, commissioned services can have an important and far-reaching impact on mental health issues. By improving their awareness of the effects of mental health in the workplace and in the community, providers can effectively signpost while championing initiatives.

Ethical standards

The framework will also incorporate a series of mandatory ethical requirements that we expect of ourselves and from those who want to do business with the council. These are non-negotiable and currently include:

- paying the London Living Wage, and ensuring the supply chain does likewise
- no blacklisting of trade union members
- safeguards against modern slavery
- care providers sign up to UNISON's Ethical Care Charter
- not specifying, purchasing or using products that damage the environment in cases where a reasonable alternative is available.

Sharing information to show the benefits of social value

Organisationally, we will collate social value in each department and report to Corporate Management Board (CMB) through a corporate social value dashboard. This will enable the organisation to review progress on social value on a quarterly basis as part of financial/resource management, to address under-performance, see where we are achieving social value and where there are gaps, which commissioners will be encouraged to fill in future contracts.

Further analysis of current performance, the local economy to determine a benchmark is underway, in order to set meaningful stretch targets for Islington. Over this strategy we aim to report on the local spend and its circulation in the economy through the borough's social value 'multiplier' and identifying spend 'leakage' to design future interventions. We will commit to establishing and publishing a social value baseline, setting out our long term commitments and targets to use our supply chain to deliver more local jobs, training and other community benefits.

As a shared ambition with anchor institutions or at a sub-regional level, we would like to collect data to demonstrate not only how much financial value we have retained locally, but also how much additional social value we have collectively generated. This range of indicators would be able to measure the wider impact of Islington suppliers across a range of social value outputs.

Their strategic oversight and links to the community make elected members an integral part of delivering social value. By sharing implementation plans for key measures, members can both scrutinise and champion objectives of the Commissioning and Procurement board within both the council and in their wards.

C3. Enhancing small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and micro business engagement

Unique skills require tailored support

Defined as organisations with fewer than 250 employees and turnover less than £50million, small and medium businesses play a vital role in keeping money circulating in the local and sub-regional¹ economy. Even smaller, micro business have under 10 staff and a turnover under £2million. Both are more likely to employ local people, and are an integral part of an inclusive economy and a progressive procurement strategy.

SMEs have the capacity to deliver high value and high demand contracts, but may require additional support in doing this. This might involve partnering with other providers or through improving management practices. The corporate procurement function will ensure that guidance is made available to help SMEs to understand relevant requirements, including the development of consortia, as part of the Tender Resource Pack on the public website.

The tender process can be overwhelming for SMEs though, requiring a high level of information and the ability to write concisely. Procurement practitioners will ensure processes are streamlined, using standard forms and straightforward language wherever possible, including consideration of using lots to support local or SMEs. Jargon will be consciously removed from documentation to support engagement.

Building capacity to deliver real benefits for the borough

We will seek to apply a long-term approach to building local wealth in the community with new formulas that reward investment in research, development and innovation by SMEs and in understanding how to steward the market to spur innovation in service delivery.

We will also seek to connect and resource the third sector to contribute and co-design social value initiatives with the council and private sector so that it can compete for public sector contracts.

We will build the capacity of smaller, local provider market through market warming, creating a suppliers' network especially in deprived areas offering training, next generation responsible business practice, and draw on best practice from other local authorities. This will include supporting new consortia and alternative business models with a preference for employee owned businesses.

¹ The council shall recognise the definition of local to mean within Islington, sub-regional to mean within the boroughs immediately adjacent to Islington, regional to mean within Greater London area and national to mean within the recognised boundary of the United Kingdom for reporting purposes.

The council will continue to act as an innovator to encourage the supply chain to do work through their expertise and are encouraged to support and endorse accreditations and charters such as:

- time banks
- matters on living wage
- fairer tax
- employment practices (such as caring responsibilities or flexible working policies)
- ethical procuring
- environmental sustainability
- supply chain visibility.

To support suppliers as part of the tender process, mechanisms will be put in place to be able to raise questions and/or provide feedback on social value aspects of a tender process, including departmental led market warming events and guidance, which officers respond to appropriately with feedback and encourage innovation.

Exemplars of excellence in social value will be shared with plans to help others address the delivery of the policy in individual strategies, with a focus on upskilling local, micro, small, medium sized enterprises and voluntary community sector enterprises.

From early intervention to long term support

To support local growth, SME engagement will form an integral part of central corporate policy. By undertaking market testing and early market engagement where appropriate, commissioners will work with SMEs collectively or on an individual basis to achieve desired corporate outcomes and help ensure SMEs are ready for relevant opportunities.

This level of support will extend over the entire life of a contract and not just the commissioning and procurement stages. The following support will be provided:

- local and SME organisations will be given the opportunity to contribute to the commissioning process in an engaged manner, whether through specific events or communication channels with efforts made to establish partnership working
- provider days will allow for questions to be asked and partnerships to be formed where relevant to build business capacity and capability with relevant link officers established
- Commissioning and Procurement Board and the operational Supply Chain Practitioners Group will have an oversight role on training provided to the sector, identifying training need and approving how this will be delivered
- the council will transparently provide information on main contractors to allow small and medium sized enterprises to be able to approach main contractors directly
- commissioners recognise the niche expertise which local and SME organisations can bring to the council delivery of services and will actively design commissioning and procurement practice to enable such groups to integrate into sourced delivery
- tenders will be transparently advertised on a portal which can provide automatic notification of available opportunities with sufficient time before bids are due for local and SME organisations to mobilise themselves to submit a bid
- the council will develop a better understanding of capacity and capability of local and SMEs, including some use of dynamic purchasing systems and adaption of specifications and contract sizes to reflect market capability
- providers are given the opportunity to raise questions throughout the procurement process and, when it is concluded, feedback is provided which enables organisations to understand where they have performed well or need improvement
- improved support will be provided to sub-contractors – ensuring sub-contractors have methods to liaise with the main contractor where a direct contract is not in place, as well as putting in place whistleblowing procedures to highlight poor treatment by main contractors and where payments have not been made, to seek appropriate sums to be paid direct from the Council
- contract managers will meet regularly with all providers to assess work delivered and proactively offer opportunities to improve work and advise where to look for further opportunities.

C4. Enhancing voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) engagement

Empowering the VCSE sector, empowering communities

The voice of the local community needs to be heard in the planning of the council's services. For the inclusive economy to be truly inclusive, the VCSE sectors will be involved in identifying which issues need to be considered in the council's procurement. These organisations will be actively encouraged to work with the council, integrating the work they do as a core component of the council's commissioning and procurement practice.

All VCSE groups have their role to play. From small community groups, registered charities – large and small, foundations, trusts, social enterprises, to co-operatives and staff mutual, the council will actively work with these organisations where and when this is appropriate, to ensure their views are heard. Closer links lead to stronger relationships, leading to better information sharing. By making full use of these relationships, the council will be in a stronger position to deliver social value through better planning and delivery.

Through strengthening links and improving communication, commissioners will have regular and meaningful contact with the VCSE sector. Organisations will be made aware of opportunities to work with the council through the use of proactive messaging, as well as establishing formal and informal networks. By proactively engaging with VCSEs and/or their infrastructure bodies, commissioners can ensure that they are given appropriate notice of opportunities and can galvanise responses to respond to opportunities.

By working more closely with the VCSE sector, commissioners will be in a strong position to balance addressing short term needs while establishing long term priorities. To show its commitment to the sector, the council will investigate longer term agreements, particularly in people services. To build long term capacity, the council will take steps to improve links between providers of different sizes, with the potential to form partnerships or work together in umbrella organisations. Improving long term planning will enable community organisations to form consortia and pool their skills and resources.

Working with the community to plan services better

Making the best use of the VCSE sector's specialist local knowledge is important. Commissioners have access to resources and/or training to raise awareness of this, in order to more appropriately meet the needs of Islington's diverse communities, while also facilitating outreach. With the support of Community Services, this outreach will also ensure the council can work alongside the community to better design services that meet the community's needs, building reliable links for engagement and communication.

By identifying a lead officer within teams for working with the VCSE sector, services have a strong link to the community. Reducing the number of staff working with the VCSE sector reduces consultation fatigue, while also ensuring communities have a consistent point of contact within that service. This contact will take a degree of responsibility for linking into the commissioning process and the council's work to upskill providers.

Strong formal and informal links between the VCSE sector and the council's services promotes better understanding of the landscape of providers in the community. Their continuous, proactive partnership strengthens community relations and helps identify providers who can be approached as and when required. Through the use of dynamic purchasing systems, providers will be given the opportunity to work with the council throughout the period of an agreement when they are required, and not have to wait years for an opportunity to work with the council.

Making better use of the VCSE sector through contract management and scrutiny

Spend with VCSE organisations will be recorded and published in the public domain. This improves accountability and transparency of spend, while also celebrating the work we do with the sector. This information will be reviewed to consider how to enhance the work we undertake with VCSE organisations, maximising opportunities where appropriate.

There are contracts in place where VCSE sector organisations are either the main provider or organisations form part of the supply chain. In order to maximise the sector's involvement, the council will take into account the particular needs, capabilities and capacity of the sector when considering contract performance. We will treat VCSE sector organisations fairly, pay them promptly and not pass unnecessary risk to these organisations.

In order to highlight the work being undertaken with the VCSE sector, members will be kept informed. The Commissioning and Procurement Board will feed back information to the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee. By considering contract size, spend and requirements, the Commissioning and Procurement Board will gain a full picture of the capacity and capability of the borough's VCSE sector which can be reported to members accordingly.

C5. Commitments

- ✓ establish a cross-council/partner social value champions network to share best practice, support cultural and practice change, and ultimately help maximise social value delivery, with officer and member participation
- ✓ all external tenders will include social value commitments in contractual deliverables and these commitments will be weighted at 20% of the overall scoring/evaluation where at all possible, with robust justification needed before defaulting to the 5% statutory requirement
- ✓ establish a comprehensive, thematic social value delivery framework with measurable targets and mandatory ethical standards, to both track commitments across individual contracts and demonstrate delivery across the borough
- ✓ social value delivery will be reported through a set of dashboards, publishing this information from time to time
- ✓ provide tailored and practical procurement support to SME and micro businesses, removing as many barriers to participation as possible and provide comprehensive support throughout the contract lifecycle
- ✓ establish local supplier networks to strengthen local providers and encourage innovation
- ✓ provide tailored and practical procurement support to the VCSE sector, removing as many barriers to participation as possible and provide comprehensive support throughout the contract lifecycle.