



SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP26/15

SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL – 6 MARCH 2026

SUBJECT: PROCUREMENT AND COMMERCIAL FRAMEWORK

SUMMARY:

1. The Constabulary operates a formal, centralised procurement and commercial framework delivered locally, regionally through 7 Force Commercial Services (7FCS) and using national contracts and frameworks through BlueLight Commercial (BLC) and other national bodies including Crown Commercial Services, Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation and Health Trust Europe.
2. All new procurements are aligned with the Procurement Act 2023, Contract Standing Orders, and value-for-money principles, with robust strategic oversight via regional governance boards. Together these support theme 1: an efficient and effective police Constabulary for Suffolk in the Police and Crime Commissioner's police and crime plan.
3. Procurement processes are proportionate to value, with clear rules on competition, evaluation, approvals and audit trails. Procurement decisions consider quality, whole-life cost and social value, not just price. Single Tender Actions are tightly controlled and challenged where appropriate, and procurement decisions are documented to support internal and external scrutiny. A recent internal audit review confirms strong controls and good compliance in practice.
4. Collaborative procurement has delivered significant benefits. In 2025/26, 7FCS has delivered £286k savings contributing to a cumulative £2.36m in total savings over 4 years, while BLC activity delivered £322k in 2024/25 through cashable savings, cost avoidance and income generation, demonstrating clear value for money from regional and national collaboration.
5. Social value benefits, with a value of £2.5m over 4 years, include local employment, apprenticeships, community support, training, volunteering and spend in the local supply chain, ensuring procurement contributes to wider community and PCC objectives.
6. The national policing landscape is evolving through the Police Efficiencies and Collaboration Programme and the recently published police reform white paper, both of which have significant implications for the Constabulary's procurement and commercial arrangements.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. The PCC is asked to consider the progress made by the Constabulary and raise issues with the Chief Constable as appropriate to the PCC's role in holding the Chief Constable to account.

DETAIL OF THE SUBMISSION

1. KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:

- 1.1 Suffolk Constabulary's budget for third party spend in 2025/26 is £38 million, representing 22% of its total net revenue budget. It has over 280 commercial contracts with suppliers for the provision of goods and services of which 48, or 17%, have a whole-life value in excess of £1 million. The majority of these higher-value contracts form part of nationally managed arrangements administered externally through the Police Digital Service, BlueLight Commercial (BLC), or the Home Office.
- 1.2 Of all purchase orders raised each year, 97.5% are valued at under £60,000. This demonstrates that the Constabulary's procurement activity is predominantly low-value, with only a small proportion of high-value procurements within the overall third-party spend.

Report Structure

- 1.3 The report presents Suffolk Constabulary's procurement and commercial arrangements. It begins with detailed section on the procurement and commercial operating model, governance, legal compliance and procurement processes, including how value for money and social value are embedded.
- 1.4 The report then presents quantified procurement benefits from regional (7FCS) and national (BLC) activity, as well as wider social value outcomes. Independent audit findings are summarised to provide external assurance on the effectiveness of controls.
- 1.5 Further sections outline the national policing context, including the Police Efficiencies and Collaboration Programme and the recently published police reform white paper, highlighting their implications for the Constabulary's future procurement and commercial arrangements.

2.0 PROCUREMENT AND COMMERCIAL OPERATING FRAMEWORK

Governance and Operating Model

- 2.1 The Constabulary operates within a formal, centralised procurement and commercial governance framework delivered through the 7 Constabulary Commercial Services (7FCS) function. This model supports collaborative procurement across the seven forces in the eastern region and ensures that commercial activity is consistently controlled, legally compliant and aligned to value-for-money principles. Procurement activity below £60,000 is managed locally by the Constabulary. All procurement activity with an aggregated spend over £60,000 is managed through 7FCS, providing regional oversight and professional commercial expertise.
- 2.2 Strategic oversight of procurement activity is exercised through the Strategic Procurement Governance Board (SPGB), that is chaired by the Suffolk PCC. A regional Commercial Executive Board (CEB), chaired by a regional Constabulary ACO, provides operational oversight. These bodies provide assurance, escalation routes and transparency, while decision-making authority remains with the appropriate Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and Chief Constables in accordance with statutory responsibilities and financial delegations.

Compliance with Legislation and Standing Orders

- 2.3 Procurement activity is required to comply with all relevant statutory requirements, including the Procurement Act 2023 and associated regulations, alongside the Constabulary's Contract Standing Orders (CSOs). CSOs apply to all procurements and contract variations and are mandatory for all officers and staff involved in purchasing or commissioning activity.
- 2.4 There is a clear expectation that advice on specialist or complex procurement matters is obtained through 7FCS, ensuring that legal, commercial and regulatory risks are appropriately managed and escalated where necessary

Proportionate and Controlled Procurement Processes

- 2.5 The Constabulary applies a proportionate procurement approach, with competition requirements and approval thresholds aligned to contract value:
- Low-value purchases under £6k require basic market testing.
 - Mid-value procurements between £6k and £60k require 3 competitive quotations.
 - High-value procurements with an aggregated spend above £60k are subject to formal tender processes designed and managed by 7FCS.
- 2.6 Contract values are calculated over the full life of the contract, including extensions, and requirements must not be artificially disaggregated to avoid competition. This control mitigates the risk of non-compliant procurement practices.
- 2.7 Evaluation criteria must be defined in advance, applied consistently, and cannot be amended once a procurement process has commenced. Evaluations are required to be objective, auditable and conducted by multiple officers, with declarations of impartiality completed.

Value for Money and Social Value

- 2.8 The Constabulary's procurement framework is explicitly designed to achieve best overall value for money, rather than lowest price alone. Contract awards are based on an assessment of price, quality and social value, with whole-life costing considered where appropriate. Social value considerations include environmental impact, equality, diversity, modern slavery and economic benefits delivered through the supply chain.
- 2.9 This approach integrates procurement decisions with broader organisational and community priorities while ensuring transparency and robust decision-making. It supports the PCC's statutory duty to delivery social value and the Chief Constable's policing objectives by addressing the underlying causes of crime. Social value ensures that public expenditure delivers not only effective policing, but also contributes to safer, stronger, and more resilient communities.

Use of Corporate and Collaborative Contracts

- 2.10 Where a corporate or regional contract already exists, its use is mandatory. This ensures consistency, economies of scale and reduced commercial risk. Alternative or parallel contracts are not approved where a suitable corporate arrangement is in place.

- 2.11 The framework actively supports collaborative contracting and framework agreements, including arrangements involving other Constabularies or public sector bodies, delivered on a lead PCC basis where appropriate.

Exceptions and Single Tender Actions

- 2.12 The Constabulary recognises limited circumstances where competition may not be possible. Single Tender Actions (STAs) are therefore tightly controlled and permitted only where clearly justified, such as supplier exclusivity, operational urgency or security considerations.
- 2.13 Higher-value STAs are subject to scrutiny by 7FCS and senior financial approval, with reporting to the joint Suffolk and Norfolk CFO meetings and to CEB to ensure transparency and post-award assurance.

Transparency and Audit Trail

- 2.14 The Constabulary complies with the Procurement Act 2023 transparency requirements, including the publication of mandatory notices for notifiable below-threshold and above-threshold contracts. Responsibilities for publication are clearly defined between the Constabulary and 7FCS, reducing the risk of non-compliance.
- 2.15 Procurement decisions, evaluations and approvals are documented and retained, providing a clear audit trail for internal and external scrutiny.

Contract Award and Legal Form

- 2.16 Contracts over defined thresholds must be in writing and include standard contractual protections, such as indemnities, default provisions and transfer arrangements. Certain high-risk agreements, including construction contracts over £250,000 or contracts requiring extended enforceability, are executed as Deeds, ensuring legal robustness.
- 2.17 Formal Contract Award Approval Reports are required for all tenders and Single Tender Actions over £60,000, ensuring accountability and appropriate senior sign-off.

Contract Management and Ongoing Assurance

- 2.18 Strategic regional and collaborative contracts that are deemed operationally critical are managed centrally by 7FCS in accordance with a contract management manual, providing consistency and professional oversight. Other contracts requiring active management are managed locally by Constabularies supported by guidance, training and oversight from 7FCS.
- 2.19 A regional contracts register is maintained and published internally, supporting transparency, oversight and effective contract lifecycle management.

3.0 PROCUREMENT BENEFITS

- 3.1 This section presents quantified procurement benefits from regional (7FCS) and national (BLC) activity, as well as wider social value outcomes. Savings from local procurement activity, i.e. below £60k are not captured.

7 Force Commercial Services – Benefits

- 3.2 Procurement benefits delivered by 7FCS are shown in **Table 1** below. Benefits derive from collaboration and lower costs through volume discounts, stronger supplier leverage, and improved operational efficiency. It brings greater consistency across the region, supports shared best practice, and enhances the Constabulary’s negotiating position. Working at scale also encourages supplier innovation and increases the impact and reach of our social value commitments.

Table 1: Procurement benefits delivered by 7FCS

	2026 ¹	Total ²
	£000	£000
Cashable savings	75	627
Cost avoidance	198	1,200
Contract savings (additional benefits from procurement activity)	13	534
Total	286	2,361

Source: Figures have been provided by 7 FCS

Notes

¹ Benefits quoted are for the 11 months to February 2026.

² This is the cumulative benefits total since data was recorded in 7FCS’s Atamis system from 2022.

- 3.3 7FCS delivered a total of £2.36m in procurement benefits over the 4-year reporting period, with £286k achieved in 2025/26. These benefits were generated through three primary value streams: cashable savings, cost avoidance, and contract savings.
- 3.4 Cost avoidance represented the most significant contribution, totalling £1.2m, with £198k delivered in 2025/26. Cashable savings accounted for £627k cumulatively, including £75k in 2026, reflecting tangible reductions in organisational expenditure. Contract savings contributed a further £534k overall, with £13k secured in 2025/26.
- 3.5 These outcomes demonstrate the continued effectiveness of 7FCS’s procurement activity in delivering measurable financial value and supporting organisational efficiency.

BlueLight Commercial – Benefits

- 3.6 Procurement benefits delivered by BLC during 2024/25 are shown in **Table 2** below. These benefits accrue from the Constabulary’s use of nationally available contracts and framework agreements.

Table 2: Procurement benefits delivered by BLC

	2024/25
	£000
Cashable savings	89
Cost avoidance	172
Income generation	61
Total	322

Source: BLC, Suffolk Full Year Benefits Statement 2024/25.

3.7 **Table 2** shows that during 2024/25, Suffolk realised a total financial benefit of £322k through participation in BLC national and collaborative procurement activity. This benefit comprised £89k in cashable savings, £172k in cost avoidance, and £61k in revenue generation, calculated using Home Office definitions. These benefits demonstrate value for money delivered through national collaboration. The benefits are shown in **Box 1** and covered the following operational and corporate areas.

Box 1: Span of benefits across operational and corporate areas

- **ICT:** Adobe ETLA III, IBM access agreements.
- **Operational Policing:** Vehicle procurement, fuel cards, forensic consumables.
- **Firearms licencing:** fee review and statutory increases.
- **Estates, Energy and Equipment:** Confidential waste, sustainability tools, detainee clothing.
- **People and Professional Services:** Legal support, procurement advice.
- **Training and Capability:** Procurement Act implementation and training support.

Source: BLC, Suffolk Full Year Benefits Statement 2024/25

3.8 BLC has identified opportunities for the Constabulary to use other national frameworks and potentially increase the level of its procurement benefits. These are in the following areas: cyber security penetration testing, robotic processing automation, car salary sacrifice, in-car CCTV, ANPR and replacement windscreens. The Constabulary plans to migrate onto available frameworks when current contracts expire and where it is deemed financial beneficial.

Social Value – Benefits

3.9 Social value ensures that every pound spent by the PCC and the Constabulary helps not only to deliver policing services, but also to build safer, stronger and more resilient communities. Social value benefits are estimated to have monetised value of £2.5m for the four years to 2025/26. They include local employment, apprenticeships, community support, training, volunteering and spend in the local supply chain, ensuring procurement contributes to wider community and PCC objectives. These are shown in **Table 3** below. Delivery of agreed social value benefits is monitored through the 7FCS contract monitoring process.

Table 3: Social value benefits delivered 2022/23 to 2025/26

	£000
Local direct employees employed	1,381
Local supply chain spend	637
Working with the community	223
Hours dedicated to training	97
Volunteering	30
Donations	27
Mental health/ wellbeing support	22
Apprentices employed	10
Supporting victims of crime	10
Other	72
Total	2,510

Source: Figures have been provided by 7FCS

4.0 INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

- 4.1 The Constabulary's internal auditors performed a review on how effective and compliant the procurement arrangements were across Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies, particularly following implementation of the Procurement Act 2023. It examined whether core procurement controls were in place and working properly, including the accuracy of the contracts register, how procurement for works, services and supplies is carried out, the use of waivers or Single Tender Actions, monitoring of aggregated spend to avoid bypassing tender rules, and overall compliance at a departmental level.
- 4.2 The review concluded that the procurement arrangements across Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies were adequate and operating effectively. It found that both organisations were properly applying the Procurement Act 2023, with core controls in place and working as intended. The review identified good controls and areas of good compliance. These are provided in Box 2 and Box 3 below.

Box 2: Examples of good controls

The review identified areas where controls were strong and well-embedded:

1. Procurement governance framework

- A documented governance framework is in place, aligned to financial instructions, scheme of delegation and regulatory requirements.
- Clear alignment between the strategic procurement policy (high-level principles) and Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) (detailed procedures).

2. Up-to-date policies aligned to legislation

- The 7 Forces Strategic Procurement Policy was updated in August 2024 to reflect the Procurement Act 2023 and is not due for review until 2027.
- Contract Standing Orders were updated in December 2024, explicitly referencing the Procurement Act 2023 and new transparency requirements.

3. Contract and pipeline management

- A central contract register is maintained for all contracts across the forces.
- A procurement pipeline is maintained, showing:
 - Category and scope.
 - Supplier.
 - Forces involved.
 - Estimated value
 - Target award date.
 - Applicable legislation (Public Contract Regulations 2015 or Procurement Act 2023).
- Review of expiring contracts confirmed all were already included in the pipeline, demonstrating proactive control.

4. Strong controls over waivers/ Single Tender Actions

- Single Tender Actions are tightly controlled and used only when strictly necessary.
- Only two STAs in the last 12 months, both fully documented and approved within delegated authority limits.

5. Tender evaluation and fraud prevention

- CSOs require at least three officers to be involved in tender evaluations.
- All evaluators must complete declarations of impartiality.
- Evaluation records are retained to support transparency and auditability.

6. Training and system access controls

- All procurement staff completed Cabinet Office training on the Procurement Act 2023, which was cascaded across the forces.
- Mandatory training is required before access to e-tendering is granted, helping ensure only competent users undertake procurement activity.
- Bi-monthly procurement training sessions are available to officers and staff.

Source: TIAA, Assurance review of procurement strategy and compliance including waivers.

Box 3: Examples of good compliance

The audit provides clear evidence of compliance in practice:

1. Compliance with procurement rules

- Sample testing of ten contracts (£67k–£30m) confirmed:
 - Correct procurement routes were used.
 - Frameworks, tenders and STAs were appropriately justified.
 - All activity complied with Contract Standing Orders.

2. High contract coverage of spend

- Analysis showed:
 - 69% of Suffolk spend (2019–2024) was covered by contracts.

3. Sustainability and social value embedded

- Sustainability and social value are explicitly embedded in procurement policy.
- These align with the PCC's Carbon Reduction and Environmental Action Plan.
- Evidence from tender documentation confirmed sustainability and social value criteria were actively applied.

4. Monitoring and response to non-compliance

- Where non-compliance was identified (e.g. spend without contracts, incorrect execution method), it was:
 - Clearly documented
 - Acknowledged by management
 - Supported by agreed corrective actions and timescales

Source: TIAA, Assurance review of procurement strategy and compliance including waivers.

5.0 POLICE EFFICIENCIES AND COLLABORATION PROGRAMME

5.1 The UK government, in response to recommendations from the Policing Productivity Review, established a Police Efficiencies and Collaboration Programme (PECP) in 2024. This programme aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policing across England and Wales. Its purpose and expected key outputs are provided below.

5.2 The overarching purpose of the programme is to free up police officer time and improve public confidence in policing by reducing bureaucracy, enhancing productivity, and fostering greater collaboration across forces. The government aims to achieve this by:

- **Maximising the benefits of existing investment:** Ensuring that the funding provided to policing, including the recruitment of 20,000 new officers, is used to its full potential.
- **Driving efficiency savings:** Identifying and implementing cost-saving measures, particularly through joint procurement (e.g., energy, IT, fleet contracts) and streamlined processes.
- **Leveraging technology and innovation:** Promoting the adoption of new technologies like AI, facial recognition, drones, and automated systems to reduce administrative

burdens and enhance operational capabilities.

- **Improving data quality and utilisation:** Strengthening police data capabilities to inform decision-making, manage performance, and identify areas for improvement.
- **Restoring focus on core policing:** Enabling officers to spend more time on preventing and investigating crime, and protecting the public, rather than on unproductive tasks.

5.3 The programme has ambitious targets, with the primary expected output being the release of approximately 38 million hours of police officer time over five years. This is equivalent to the capacity of an additional 20,000 officers. More specific outputs include:

- **Tangible productivity improvements** across forces, including those enabled by technology.
- **Better-informed strategic planning** at force level through improved Force Management Statements.
- **Cash-releasing efficiencies** from improved procurement and streamlined contracts.
- **Improved data capture, quality, and use** for local and national decision-making.
- **Enhanced public confidence** in policing through a focus on core policing functions and improved outcomes for victims.
- **Increased use of technology** such as facial recognition, drones, and AI to support policing operations.

5.4 Savings area already being achieved through national commercial frameworks, but the overall programme is still maturing. Suffolk Constabulary has signed up to or is actively considering the following PECP/BLC national initiatives:

- Crown Commercial Services' V30 energy basket for gas and electricity
- End user devices' national aggregation for laptops, desktops, phones and peripherals
- Discount fuel initiative
- Transport – national fleet contracts
- National e-commerce platform for high volume low-value 'tail spend' purchases

6.0 POLICE REFORM WHITE PAPER

6.1 The 2026 police reform white paper, *From Local to National: A New Model for Policing*, outlines significant changes to policing, including the creation of a National Police Service (NPS) and potential consolidation of forces. These reforms are linked to enhancing efficiency, improving technology use, and reducing fragmentation - all of which carry procurement and commercial implications.

Centralisation of Procurement

6.2 The reform agenda includes a clear intention to centralise policing procurement, enabling policing to operate at greater scale and consistency. Analysis highlights that centralised procurement will help policing leverage innovation and supplier capability at scale.

6.3 Consolidated structures within the NPS will allow sharing of resources, technology and commercial frameworks nationally. This implies a shift from local and regional procurement regimes toward national frameworks and more harmonised commercial processes.

Technology and Digital Forensics

- 6.4 The NPS will assume responsibility for specialist and digital forensics capabilities. The white paper commits to deploying new technologies and improving digital forensics capacity to address a backlog of devices awaiting analysis. Industry is already partnering with policing on digital evidence tools, analytics and solutions that boost operational capability.
- 6.5 This implies growth in national technology procurements, rationalisation of legacy IT contracts at a local and regional level, and increased demand for advanced digital tools.

Efficiency and Value for Money

- 6.6 Structural consolidation through force mergers is framed as a mechanism to deliver better financial performance. Reducing the number of forces is expected to improve cost-efficiency and provide better value to the taxpayer.
- 6.7 This implies greater scrutiny on contract performance, cost savings, and return on investment. As a consequence, forces should expect renegotiation, consolidation, or termination of existing commercial arrangements.

Supplier Engagement and Market Dynamics

- 6.8 Reform creates opportunities for deeper, more strategic engagement with suppliers. Centralisation enables policing to engage with suppliers more coherently, supporting innovation and the scaling of advanced technologies.
- 6.9 The likely implication is the emergence of fewer, more strategic suppliers operating at national scale, with clearer pipelines and larger contract opportunities.

Impact on the Constabulary

- 6.10 The white paper represents a structural and operational reset for policing, and the commercial implications are substantial. Centralisation of procurement, a shift toward national technology platforms, and a strengthened regulatory framework will reshape how policing engages with markets, suppliers and its own internal commercial functions.
- 6.11 Early preparation and strategic alignment will be essential to ensure the Constabulary maximises the benefits of reform while effectively managing any associated risks.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial implications additional to those mentioned in the report.

8.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISK

- 8.1 There are no other implications and risks.

9.0 CHIEF OFFICER COMMENTS

- 9.1 The report demonstrates that the Constabulary's procurement and commercial arrangements are well-governed, legally compliant and delivering value for money, supported by independent audit assurance.
- 9.2 Opportunities to increase savings through the further use of national contracts and frameworks will be taken forward in the next financial year and the Constabulary will support delivery of initiatives in the police reform white paper to improve efficiency, enhance capability and deliver increased value for money.