

Social Value Policy

2026

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Version	Date	Changes/rationale	Author

1. Introduction

1.1. What is Social Value?

Social Value is about the difference that we can make in our communities through our contracting of services and goods - measuring what is important to people, beyond profit. It asks the question: *If £1 is spent on the delivery of services, can that same £1 be used to also produce a wider benefit to the community?*¹.

A Social Value approach involves looking beyond the price of each individual contract to consider the collective benefit to local communities, the economy and or the environment.

1.2. Purpose

Under the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 (“the Act”), councils must consider how procurement can improve economic, social, and environmental wellbeing. The Procurement Act 2023 strengthens this obligation by requiring authorities to “have regard to the importance of maximising public benefit”.

For Southend, this means the Council, its suppliers, and Southend’s communities working together to identify opportunities, both big and small, to help residents stay healthy, live fulfilling lives, and care for the outdoor spaces we value. Across the UK, local authorities face ongoing financial pressures from reduced funding and increasing demand for services. This makes partnership working essential to deliver better outcomes with limited resources.

This policy outlines out the Council’s approach to implementing the Act and associated legislation. It further recognises the potential that Social Value has in supporting the vision and priorities set out in the corporate plan, and commitment to continuing to strive to make Southend a better place whilst delivering best value for money.

1.3. Aims

This policy aims to maximise the positive impact of Social Value in Southend-on-Sea by:

- Outlining the Council’s Social Value approach and priorities
- Guiding suppliers, partners, and officers on our Social Value commitments and principles
- Describing how the Council will embed Social Value into commissioning and procurement and measure Social Value outcomes

1.4. Scope

This policy applies to:

- The Council’s procurement and commissioning of goods, services, and works
- The Council’s own operations, including our in-house services and employment practices
- The Council’s wider work and influence with partners locally and nationally

¹ Social Enterprise UK

1.5. Strategic context

The [Corporate Plan for 2024 to 2028](#) is the principal corporate strategy of Southend-on-Sea City Council. It recognises our primary role in delivering good quality local government services in the city.

Social Value is an important mechanism for achieving our corporate plan priorities:

- Proud and prosperous
- Safe, clean and green
- Caring with a good quality of life for all
- Led by a transformative, responsive council

Our Social Value outcomes for each of the Corporate Plan priorities are listed in appx.1.

1.6. National context

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 required all public bodies in England and Wales to consider how the services they commission and procure might improve the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of their respective areas. The Act gave local authorities the freedom to determine what kind of additional social value would best serve the needs of local communities provided that the social value obtained is relevant to the contract and its request is proportionate.

Under Section 12 of the Procurement Act 2023, contracting authorities must "have regard to the importance of maximising public benefit" when awarding contracts. This represents a major shift from the Social Value Act 2012, which only required authorities to "consider" Social Value. It also enables contracts to be awarded on the basis of the Most Advantageous Tender (MAT) rather than purely economic criteria; this empowers authorities to take a broader view of value. The Procurement Act 2023 also strengthens the role of Social Value in procurement decisions, not only at the evaluation stage but across the entire contract lifecycle.

2. The benefits of a social value approach

A Social Value approach involves looking beyond the price of each individual contract and considering the collective benefit to local communities when the Council chooses to award a contract. Procurement and commissioning officers might, for example, consider requesting additional social value that tackles a key local issue, addresses a gap in service delivery or strengthens local communities in other ways such as contributing to the local economy.

The Council spent c. £200M on contracts in 2024/25, many of which by default will deliver positive economic, environmental, and social outcomes that align to the corporate plan priorities.

The Social Value Portal highlights that Social Value has reached a tipping point - what began as a policy tweak is now reshaping the economy. Since 2020, £32 billion of validated social value has been delivered, and the median Social Value-Add per contract

is 16%, meaning that for every £1 spent, an additional 16p of value was created for communities².

Previous Social Value example

A great example of Social Value delivered in Southend is through the waste disposal contract with Suez. Suez delivered significant environmental benefits by generating enough electricity to power approximately 3,000 homes within the first 10 months of the contract, directly contributing to the Council's *Safe, Clean and Green* priority. A remarkable proxy value of £180,230 was provided - based upon the CO2 tonnage saving on emissions.

Other examples of Social Value delivered in Southend include:

- Creating local jobs and apprenticeships
- Providing training and work placements
- Providing targeted support to individuals who may face barriers to employment
- Donating funds or resources to charities operating locally
- Encouraging volunteering and community engagement
- Promoting education and skills development
- Reducing carbon emissions

3. Our commitments

3.1. Social Value in commissioning and procurement

- We will seek to secure additional Social Value in the contracts we award through collaborative working, and we will direct those benefits to communities where they are most needed.
- There is no 'one size fits all' model for achieving Social Value; it is an area where providers and commissioners nationally are learning about how best to achieve and evidence it. The aspirations of this policy and the guidance within the toolkits will continue to be informed by national developments and our local learning.

3.2. Social Value in everything that we do

- We recognise that commissioning and procurement has a key part to play in achieving the Council's corporate plan priorities. But our ability to improve outcomes for local people goes beyond how we buy goods and services - we want

² [The State of the Nation: Social Value in 2025](#)

to challenge ourselves and others to uncover the hidden value in everything that we do.

- Our approach is to embed Social Value as a way of working across the Council. We want to find additional social value in all our activity, including planning, grants, human resource management and day to day running of services. We also want to be an ambassador for good practice and highlight the many examples of good practice going on in our town's businesses, schools, voluntary and community groups.

3.3. Social Value and equality

- Where Social Value is considered as part of a commissioning exercise, the public sector Equality Duty will continue to apply. This means that equality issues will continue to be considered at every stage of the commissioning cycle, including consultation and pre-procurement.
- Our Social Value asks will contribute to our Equality Objectives.
- We will promote social inclusion by ensuring our procurement procedures are transparent, accessible, and easy to understand and by providing Social Value toolkits that offer practical, accessible guidance on developing a partnership with the Council.
- We will take account of the need for positive action in respect of organisations led by, or for, equalities or community groups, and for the development of local small organisations and businesses. We will seek to nurture positive relationships and promote the engagement of these organisations in tendering. This will include actions to ensure that engagement with the marketplace and communities at pre-procurement stage is accessible to these target organisations.

4. Guiding Principles

The following principles describe our approach, including the values and behaviours which are needed to achieve our commitments.

1. Involve stakeholders

- These can be customers, employees, service users or the wider community. It is important to involve everybody affected by a decision to understand what they value. This enables you to measure impact.

2. Understand what changes

- Articulate how change is created and evaluate this through evidence gathered, recognising positive and negative changes as well as those that are intended and unintended.

3. Value the things that matter

- Making decisions about allocating resources between different options needs to recognise the values of stakeholders. Value refers to the relative importance of different outcomes. It is informed by stakeholders' preferences.

4. Only include what is material

- Collaboration within the Council is promoted so that commissioning processes impact on the shared corporate priorities and to develop a shared vision for social value between the Council, local communities, stakeholders and other organisations and businesses.
- Commissioning processes are developed to open up opportunities for more co-designed services and sustainable local delivery models.

5. Do not over-claim

- Only claim the value that activities are responsible for creating.

6. Be transparent

- Demonstrate the basis on which the analysis may be considered accurate and honest and show that it will be reported to and discussed with stakeholders.

7. Verify the result

- Ensure appropriate verification of results in line with the decisions being supported. In cases where results are being reported to external audiences or are supporting significant decisions, independent assurance may be required.

8. Be responsive

- Pursue optimum Social Value based on decision making that is timely and supported by appropriate accounting and reporting.

5. How we evaluate Social Value in our tenders

5.1. STOMs: Southend Theme Outcomes and Measures

In 2022, the Council, with support from the Social Value Portal, developed the Southend Themes, Outcomes and Measures (STOMs). A tailored framework that is aligned to the Corporate Plan Priorities and allows us to attribute a recognised monetary value towards specific areas of Social Value. This was shaped through a series of workshops involving staff from across the council, based on the national TOMs framework.

It is not possible or appropriate to have one set of Social Value outcomes that will apply to all contracts, due to the value, nature, and diversity of the wide range of goods and services commissioned. We will, therefore, apply a proportionate approach, tailored to reflect the specific commissioning and procurement needs.

Our Social Value outcomes for each of the Corporate Plan priorities are listed in appx 1.

5.2. Weighting and Thresholds

Our application of Social Value

The Procurement Act 2023 sets financial thresholds (see table below) that determine how public procurements are conducted. However, our approach to Social Value is not limited by contract value. We consider Social Value in **all** procurement activity. Social Value will carry a **minimum** weighting of 10% of the total award criteria.

The Social Value requirements will always be relevant and proportionate to the size and nature of the contract. Only in exceptional and agreed circumstances will a procurement include no Social Value requirement. This approach ensures that Social Value remains an integral part of our procurement practice.

The Procurement Act Thresholds

Contracts above these threshold amounts are subject to the full regulated procurement regime under the Procurement Act 2023. While thresholds determine the procurement process, we apply our Social Value approach as widely as practicable to maximise positive outcomes. Threshold amounts from 1 January 2026³:

Supplies & Services	£207,720 £173,100 (excl. VAT)
Light Touch Regimes for Services	£663,540 £552,950 (excl. VAT)
Works	£5,193,000 £4,327,500 (excl. VAT)

³ [PPN 023: 2026 Threshold Amounts \(HTML\) - GOV.UK](#)

5.3. Support for SMEs

As of March 2025, 99.7% of Southend's businesses are Micro, Small or Medium-sized enterprises⁴. As a result, we have an existing tried and tested approach to supporting our local economy, delivered by partnerships and projects such as the BEST Growth Hub, Southend Business Partnership, Southend Business Directory, and by offering subsidised membership to the Federation of Small Businesses. We will use these existing services and networks to identify and resolve barriers to delivering social value, engage with the market effectively and provide good visibility of opportunities.

We will ensure that contract opportunities are accessible to voluntary and community groups and social enterprises and continue our work with local businesses on how to source and bid for public sector contracts.

5.4. Additional ways to support the community

Even if a supplier is not local or the nature of the contract does not directly lend itself to Social Value, there are still many meaningful ways they can contribute, such as:

- volunteering with or donating to charities operating locally
- committing staff volunteering days to support various projects across Southend
- supporting sustainability and environmental initiatives i.e. community projects, park clean ups/litter picks, donating trees/supporting community tree planting days
- offering mentoring, training, or community workshops
- sponsoring local events
- donating resources or equipment

We actively engage with suppliers outside Southend or those without contractual social value obligations to ensure that social value principles remain central to all our activities.

SAVS, commissioned by Southend City Council, supports and represents the Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector and offers tailored ways for businesses to get involved in line with their values and goals.

6. How we will embed Social Value into commissioning and procurement

6.1. Implementation

We will:

⁴ [UK business: activity, size and location - Office for National Statistics](#) - 2025

- Take account of the social and economic benefits of buying locally, particularly through local supply chains (such as reducing unemployment and raising the skill level of the local workforce).
- Agree proportionate and relevant Social Value outcomes with the marketplace at pre-procurement stage and ensure that they are linked to the Corporate Plan priorities. Service areas and procurement leads will consider, on a case-by-case basis, the potential social outcomes that could be delivered including the most appropriate strategy to achieve them.
- Encourage corporate social responsibility amongst the supply chain and contractors.
- Ensure our equality principles are clearly stated in the Toolkits and encourage providers to develop a proactive approach to diversity.
- Where possible (and in line with the Procurement Act 2023) present opportunities to local businesses and invite them to tender for the requirements in question.
- Work with suppliers to encourage and support the development of their approach to paying the Living Wage.

6.2. Communication

We will:

- Communicate this policy to all internal staff, providers, and partners to improve understanding of our Social Value approach and practice.
- Raise awareness of the principles of Social Value by working with internal staff, the marketplace, and communities to improve understanding of Social Value, this Policy and evaluation methods.
- Send a clear message about our intention to secure Social Value through our commissioning and procurement every time we communicate with the marketplace.
- Make Social Value information available on our website to make it easier for all potential providers to develop a coherent and relevant Social Value strategy.

6.3. Social value toolkits

We will:

- Create accompanying Social Value Toolkits to support commissioners, contract managers, procurement officers and providers to deliver good Social Value.
- Provide detailed guidance in the Toolkits on the processes required to embed Social Value in how we achieve outcomes for local people.
- Align the Toolkits to the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan.

6.4. Governance

We will:

- Ensure internal controls and processes are in place to ensure fair and transparent decisions are taken about this policy, its application and evaluation.
- Appoint the Executive Director of Finance and Resources as the corporate sponsor for Social Value, providing strategic leadership and oversight.

6.5. Training and development

We will:

- Develop guidance and training for internal staff.
- Offer training to local businesses in how to bid for Public Sector contracts.
- Seek to build Social Value commissioning expertise within evaluation panels to develop evaluation criteria and best practice.

7. Monitoring and reporting

We will:

- Capture and measure the nature and amount of Social Value achieved through our contracts using the Southend Themes, Outcomes and Measures (STOMs).
- Review the STOMs annually to ensure they are aligned to the corporate priorities and any other Council priorities e.g. White Ribbon.
- Produce and publish an annual statement which will publicise our Social Value priorities, detail our achievements through commissioning and procurement, and highlight wider examples achieved both within and outside of the Council.
- Monitor our contracts to ensure that Social Value promises are fulfilled, providing support and guidance to suppliers to best deliver against their Social Value commitments.
- Regularly report our Local Spend performance indicator in internal and external performance and outcome monitoring reports.

8. Review

We will review this policy and its application on a periodic basis, or sooner if there are changes in legislation or to the Council's priorities.

We will further develop our understanding and use different evaluation techniques to show which interventions are successful in providing positive social, economic, and environmental outcomes in Southend.

We will report periodically on this Policy’s objectives and implementation to a cross-sector group, to include senior Council officers, commissioners, contract managers and staff from Procurement and Performance, alongside representatives from business sector and equality groups. This will provide us with an opportunity to adjust our approach as we learn from current practice, using evidence from providers and recipients of services, to better understand how the policy directly achieves social value outcomes.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Social Value Outcomes

SCC Corporate Plan Priorities	TOMs Outcomes
Proud and prosperous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More local people in employment • Improved skills • More opportunities for local MSMEs and VCSEs • More working with the community
Safe, clean and green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime is reduced • Carbon emissions are reduced • Safeguarding the natural environment
Caring with a good quality of life for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More opportunities for disadvantaged people • Improved employability of young people • Creating a healthier community • Enable people who may require care and support to live independently