

**PROCUREMENT BOARD ACTION PLAN IN
RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND
PERSONNEL INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC PROCUREMENT
IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

**PROCUREMENT BOARD ACTION PLAN IN RESPONSE TO
THE COMMITTEE FOR FINANCE AND PERSONNEL
INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC PROCUREMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

Background

1. The Committee for Finance and Personnel has concluded its Inquiry into Public Procurement in Northern Ireland. The report was published by the Committee on 23 February 2010 and was the subject of an Assembly Debate on that date. The motion for the debate, which was carried on the day was as follows;-

“That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for Finance and Personnel on its Inquiry into Public Procurement Policy and Practice in Northern Ireland; and calls on the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in conjunction with Executive colleagues, to implement the recommendations contained therein.”

The Inquiry

2. The terms of reference of the inquiry were that the Committee would undertake a focused scrutiny of public procurement policy and practice in Northern Ireland in order to:
 - examine the experience of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises [SMEs] and Social Economy Enterprises [SEEs] in tendering for and delivering public contracts;
 - consider the nature, extent and application of social clauses within public contracts;
 - identify issues to be addressed and which are within the remit of Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP);
 - assess progress by DFP in achieving associated objectives and targets, including those contained in the Programme for Government (PFG) and related Public Service Agreements (PSA); and

- make recommendations to DFP for improvements to public procurement policies and processes, aimed at increasing access to opportunities for SMEs and SEEs and maximising the economic and social benefits for the local community, whilst taking account of the principles governing public procurement.
3. The Inquiry commenced with a published invitation in the local press, on 3rd December 2008, for written evidence from representative bodies and organisations involved in public procurement, with particular focus on the end user experience of SMEs and SEEs in tendering. The Committee heard from a range of bodies including the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Federation of Small Business (FSB), the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS); and received approximately 40 written submissions. The last of these evidence sessions was held in June 2009. A further stakeholder conference was held in November 2009.
4. The Report contains approximately 52 recommendations grouped by themes covering:
- The procurement environment;
 - Improving policy and processes, split into 3 sub-categories
 - i. Framework agreements and contracts;
 - ii. Opportunities to bid; and
 - iii. Tendering and delivering;
 - Maximising social benefit and building capacity for purchasers and suppliers;
 - Collaborative procurement and efficiencies;
 - Litigation and lessons learned; and
 - Public procurement governance arrangements.

Proposed Approach

5. A number of the recommendations made by the Committee are already underway as part of the ongoing process of service development across the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) and the Centres of Procurement Expertise (CoPEs) arising out of the current Public Service Agreement (PSA), the Procurement Board Strategic Plan, and the NI Sustainable Development Action Plan. Many of these developments will be of benefit to small businesses and the social economy and include increasing access and awareness to procurement opportunities, achieving greater consistency of processes (which will be helped by the roll out and on-going development of the eSourcing tool), the production of additional guidance, and the establishment of a Business Industry Forum.
6. Other recommendations will require more detailed consideration including an assessment of the resource consequences of implementation, the impact on value for money and any implications for compliance with legislation. This is the case in relation to recommendations concerning further policy development, the maximisation of social benefit, and the use of frameworks and collaborative procurement. A small number, which concern wider policy issues and capacity building, will also involve consultation with other Departments.
7. The attached action plan provides an outline of proposed actions which will be taken forward over the next 18 months to address each of the Committee's recommendations. This plan is based on the availability of current resources and may be subject to change as future budget pressures become known.

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Recommendation	Actions	Lead	Target Date
<p>1. The Committee considers that it is incumbent upon the Executive and the Assembly both to create a public procurement environment that facilitates our smaller enterprises in realising their full potential and which maximises the economic and social impact from expenditure on procurement. (Paragraph 41)</p>	<p>1. Paper to be prepared for the Executive outlining current actions and further proposals for increasing access for smaller enterprises to public sector procurement. 2. To consult with OFMDFM¹ regarding work to encourage Departments to consider the contribution public procurement can make to the delivery of economic and social strategies.</p>	<p>DFP² Minister, Executive,</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>

¹ Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

² Department of Finance and Personnel

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<p>2. As a pre-requisite the existing drivers for public procurement will need to be realigned in support of the Executive’s economic, social and environmental priorities. In particular, this will require a more balanced application of the twelve guiding principles governing the administration of public procurement in Northern Ireland, which, in turn, will help achieve “best value for money”. (Paragraph 57)</p>	<p>The Procurement Board to encourage a more balanced application of the 12 principles by Departments and CoPEs³ supported by implementation of the Inquiry's recommendations and the Procurement Board's guidance on the integration of Equality and Sustainable Development into procurement.</p>	<p>Depts. CPD⁴ & CoPEs</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>
<p>3. The Committee recommends that the Procurement Board, in conjunction with DETI⁵ considers refining the definition of small and medium sized enterprises in the Northern Ireland context, paying particular attention to those currently identified as small, or micro-businesses, when exploring ways of boosting access to procurement opportunities by local businesses. (Paragraph 71)</p>	<p>The current standard EU definitions used by DETI allow for the identification of small and micro businesses. However improvements will be made to data collection to develop better information on micro, small and medium enterprises in order to identify further ways of increasing their access to public sector procurement markets. See Rec 6.</p>	<p>Procurement Board</p>	<p>n/a</p>

³ Centres of Procurement Expertise

⁴ Central Procurement Directorate

⁵ Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

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<p>4. The Committee believes that increased participation by indigenous small enterprises in providing services, supplies and works to government in Northern Ireland could encourage their growth and participation in public procurement markets elsewhere, with the added benefits of boosting employment and of raising the level of productivity/Gross Value Added within Northern Ireland. (Paragraph 79)</p>	<p>1. To consult with DETI regarding recommendations to work to develop the capacity of SMEs⁶ and SEEs⁷ to compete successfully for public procurement contracts and develop the skills to win contracts further afield. (see also Rec 40.) 2. Subject to 1. CPD and CoPES to support DETI in working to increase access of SMEs and SEEs to public sector procurement opportunities through greater use of eSourcingNI and increasing awareness of tendering processes and opportunities.</p>	<p>CPD and CoPES, DETI</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>
<p>5. The Committee calls on the Executive to develop a strategic policy for using public procurement, as far as is permitted under the legislation, as a tool for supporting the development of our smaller enterprises and for stimulating economic growth in the longer term and considers that the implementation of such a policy will require further culture change on the part of government purchasers, which sees a stronger focus on "growing the economy" and creativity in developing procurement solutions</p>	<p>To be considered in line with Recommendation 1.</p>	<p>DFP Minister, Executive</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>

⁶ Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

⁷ Social Economy Enterprises

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<p>which are sensitive to the needs of the economy, whilst also ensuring legal compliance. (Paragraph 81)</p>			
<p>6. The Procurement Board to ensure that the necessary data capture and management information systems are put in place across all the Centres of Procurement Expertise to enable the impact of procurement policy on the small business and social economy sectors to be monitored effectively. (Paragraph 92)</p>	<p>CPD and PPG⁸ to consider and bring forward proposals to the Procurement Board for consideration.</p>	<p>Procurement Board</p>	<p>Nov-10</p>
<p>7. The Committee further recommends that the criteria used in the accreditation of Centres of Procurement Expertise should take account of the robustness of the data systems in this regard. (Paragraph 92)</p>	<p>To be considered as part of the revised re-accreditation model for CoPEs which will be submitted to the Procurement Board for approval later this year.</p>	<p>Procurement Board</p>	<p>Nov-10</p>

⁸ Procurement Practitioners' Group

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Improving Policy and Processes			
<p>8. The Procurement Board should reconsider the distribution of risk within the procurement process and bring forward a policy on risk sharing, which takes account of the barriers to smaller enterprises accessing the supply chain. (Paragraph 115)</p>	<p>CPD/PPG to consider this recommendation and put forward proposals to the Procurement Board for consideration.</p>	<p>Procurement Board.</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>
<p>9. The Committee recommends that large-scale framework agreements should not be used in future unless the Procurement Board can first establish a robust evidence base for following such practice in the Northern Ireland context. (Paragraph 116)</p>	<p>CPD/PPG to consider this recommendation and put forward proposals to the Procurement Board for consideration.</p>	<p>Procurement Board.</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>

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<p>10. The Committee recommends that the Procurement Board gives careful consideration to a procurement policy that advocates breaking contracts into lots as the first recourse of any procurement tender. The intention of such action should not be to avoid the application of the appropriate public procurement regulations, but rather to make a conscious effort to reduce barriers to access for small and medium sized enterprises and social economy enterprises. (Paragraph 123)</p>	<p>CPD/PPG to consider this recommendation and put forward proposals to the Procurement Board for consideration.</p>	<p>Procurement Board</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>
<p>11. The Committee recommends that, when using framework agreements, the Central Procurement Directorate and the other Centres of Procurement Expertise develop frameworks reflecting various sizes of contracts and opportunities and, where appropriate, give consideration to regional contract variations to increase access to opportunities for smaller enterprises. (Paragraph 127)</p>	<p>PPG to consider and agree a practical way forward bearing in mind other related recommendations.</p>	<p>PPG</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>

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<p>12. The Committee recommends that the Procurement Board gives careful consideration to the full range of methods of procurement, including the use of alternatives to frameworks agreements and traditional contracts where appropriate. In particular members are keen to see a flexible approach taken to contract variance. (Paragraph 131)</p>	<p>PPG to undertake a review of the issues raised in this recommendation for consideration by the Procurement Board.</p>	<p>Procurement Board.</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>
<p>13. The Committee recommends that the Procurement Board takes steps both to consolidate all Northern Ireland public sector procurement opportunities within the remit of the e-SourcingNI web portal, including local government tender notices, and to integrate tendering opportunities in Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. (Paragraph 148)</p>	<p>To be taken into consideration in the context of future work being undertaken in relation to a procurement portal. See also Rec 15.</p>	<p>Procurement Board.</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>

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<p>14. The Committee recommends that the provision of timely and accurate information on the e-SourcingNI portal and the Investment Strategy Northern Ireland Delivery Tracking System should be written into both the business plans of each Centre of Procurement Expertise and the personal performance agreements of the responsible officials. (Paragraph 151)</p>	<p>1. CPD to work with Departments and CoPEs to ensure that ISNI⁹ website and eSourcingNI are kept up-to-date with accurate information. 2. CPD to work with Departments and CoPEs to ensure that the PPAs¹⁰ of responsible officials reflect this requirement.</p>	<p>Departments, CoPEs.</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>
<p>15. Moreover, Centres of Procurement Expertise should also be required to publish their annual procurement plans on the e-SourcingNI portal to assist small and medium sized enterprises and social economy enterprises in forward planning. (Paragraph 151)</p>	<p>To be taken into consideration in the context of future work being undertaken in relation to a procurement portal. See also Rec 13.</p>	<p>CPD, CoPEs & Departments</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>

⁹ Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland

¹⁰ Personal Performance Agreements

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<p>16. Notwithstanding the need for improved data collection by Centres of Procurement Expertise, the Committee believes that the Executive should keep under review the option of setting targets for increased participation by small and medium sized enterprises and social economy enterprises in the public sector supply chain, for possible future use in the event that the other identified policy interventions do not have sufficient impact. (Paragraph 155)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Following development of improved data in the response to Rec 6 above the Procurement Board should monitor twice yearly SME and SEE participation rates in relation to Public Sector procurement. 2. Procurement Board to review and report to the Executive following the implementation of the Inquiry's recommendations including consideration of the need to set targets for participation. 	<p>Procurement Board, CPD/PPG</p>	
<p>17. The Committee recommends that the Central Procurement Directorate encourages local small and medium sized enterprises and social economy enterprises to collaborate, where appropriate, by highlighting the benefits of such initiatives and by providing guidance on the legal and practical implications of joining consortia to facilitate joint tendering. (Paragraph 160)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CPD to take account of this recommendation in revised guidance to be produced for SMEs and SEEs and to contribute to any DETI initiatives in this area. 2. Guidance to be submitted to Procurement Board for approval. 	<p>CPD</p>	<p>Jan-11</p>

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<p>18. The Committee recommends that the Procurement Board considers the potential application of this model (CIFNI)¹¹ to also cover supplies and services and its extension to all Centres of Procurement Expertise. (Paragraph 160)</p>	<p>CPD/PPG to establish a Business and Industry Forum which will operate on similar lines to CIFNI.</p>	<p>Procurement Board</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>19. The Committee considers that purchasers should give more consideration to the overall supply chain when awarding contracts and calls on the Procurement Board to examine the scope for government to take greater control of sub-contract arrangements in public contracts, with a view to ensuring more open competition and added transparency. (Paragraph 167)</p>	<p>The selection of particular sub-contractors is a matter for the main contractor not the Government client, however, proposals have been agreed with CIFNI that, where possible, contractors are encouraged to widely advertise sub-contracting opportunities in the press.</p>	<p>Procurement Board</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<p>20. The Committee recommends that the Central Procurement Directorate and the other Centres of Procurement Expertise consider the scope both for greater use of up-front and interim payments, within the constraints of government accounting rules. (Paragraph 172)</p>	<p>PPG to consider in consultation with CFG¹² and draw to the attention of Contracting Authorities the circumstances in which up-front payments can be made.</p>	<p>CPD, CoPEs</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>

¹¹ Construction Industry Forum for Northern Ireland

¹² Central Finance Group, Department of Finance of Personnel

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<p>21. The introduction of a requirement on main contractors to pay sub-contractors within 10 days of receipt of valid invoices, with a view to increasing the borrowing potential and/or easing the cash flow pressures on small and medium sized enterprises and social economy enterprises. (Paragraph 172)</p>	<p>The Procurement Policy Handbook requires public sector contractors to pay sub-contractors within 30 days, but where the main contractor benefits from earlier payment, this should be passed on to the sub-contractor. Furthermore CIFNI has agreed that the Code of Practice for Government Construction Clients and their supply chains will include a Fair Payment Charter and a requirement that first tier subcontractors provide feedback to the Government Construction Clients on payment progress from the main contractor to the supply chain with effect from 1 March 2010.</p>	<p>CPD</p>	<p>Work is underway</p>
<p>22. The Committee recommends that the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in conjunction with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, gives careful consideration to the establishment of a public procurement brokerage service as identified by the Ulster Community Investment Trust, which could also act as a “one-stop shop” for the social economy sector in terms of availing of public procurement opportunities. (Paragraph 176)</p>	<p>DFP to consult with DETI regarding this recommendation and bring forward proposals to the Procurement Board.</p>	<p>DETI, CPD</p>	<p>Nov-10</p>

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<p>23. The Committee recommends that the Central Procurement Directorate reviews existing procurement guidance, in conjunction with local stakeholders, with a view to ensuring that it is fit for purpose. (Paragraph 184)</p>	<p>CPD keeps guidance under review and when a guidance note is being revised, or a new note produced, it will involve consultation with key stakeholders relevant to each guidance note.</p>	<p>CPD</p>	<p>Work is underway</p>
<p>24. The Committee recommends that the Central Procurement Directorate brings together the reviewed guidance as a central online resource for public sector procurement, which is linked to the eSourcingNI web portal. (Paragraph 184)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CPD guidance notes are on its website, which also has a link to eSourcing. 2. CPD will investigate placing a link to the CPD suite of guidance on the eSourcing web site. 	<p>CPD</p>	<p>Nov-10</p>
<p>25 Whilst acknowledging that, whenever public funds are at stake, proper audit, monitoring and accounting arrangements are an unavoidable necessity, the Committee recommends that the Department of Finance and Personnel, in conjunction with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, takes steps to ensure that proportionate monitoring arrangements are applied, which are sympathetic to the ethos and needs of the social economy sector. (Paragraph 188)</p>	<p>Officials in DFP to explore with officials in DETI options for implementing this recommendation.</p>	<p>CPD, DETI</p>	

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<p>26. The Committee is strongly of the view that pre-qualification processes and criteria should not be so burdensome as to deny both small and medium sized enterprises and social economy enterprises the opportunity to develop their business and thereby benefit the local economy. As such, the Committee recommends both that the principle of proportionality (i.e. the resources required to bid should be proportional to the size of contract) should be embedded into all public procurement tendering exercises. (Paragraph 198)</p>	<p>Work is continuing on standardising prequalification through the roll out of eSourcingNI across CoPEs as well as the implementation of the recommendations of the CIFNI Procurement Task Group.</p>	<p>CPD, CoPEs</p>	<p>Nov-10</p>
<p>27. The Committee recommends the next review of Centres of Procurement Expertise, due to take place in 2013, places a particular focus on progress in improving pre-qualification processes. (Paragraph 198)</p>	<p>PPG to consider inclusion of this recommendation in the revised re-accreditation model for CoPEs which will be submitted to the Procurement Board for approval later this year.</p>	<p>Procurement Board</p>	<p>Nov-10</p>

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<p>28. The Committee welcomes the development of a standardised pre-qualification questionnaire for works contracts, which is currently being taken forward by the Construction Industry Forum for Northern Ireland. The Committee recommends that, once an agreed approach has been established, the Procurement Board considers its application to all procurement sectors and across all Centres of Procurement Expertise. (Paragraph 200)</p>	<p>Work is continuing on standardising prequalification through the roll out of eSourcingNI across CoPEs as well as the implementation of the recommendations of the CIFNI Procurement Task Group.</p>	<p>Procurement Board</p>	<p>Nov-10</p>
<p>29. In noting that the Construction Industry Forum for Northern Ireland is actively considering the weighting of relevant experience in the assessment process for works contracts, the Committee recommends that the Procurement Board considers the potential for applying any lessons arising from this work across the other Centres of Procurement Expertise and to supplies and service contracts. (Paragraph 204)</p>	<p>CPD to consider in consultation with PPG and bring forward proposals.</p>	<p>Procurement Board</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>
<p>30. The Committee recommends that feedback mechanisms across all the Centres of Procurement Expertise are standardised and aligned with good practice, with greater monitoring to ensure effectiveness. (Paragraph 208)</p>	<p>A guidance note on Disclosure of Information has been produced by CPD and will be submitted to the Procurement Board in June for approval. Once approved this will provide the basis of a standardised approach to be followed by CoPEs.</p>	<p>CPD Procurement Board</p>	<p>Jun-10</p>

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<p>31. The Committee recommends that the Central Procurement Directorate provides specific guidance and support to government purchasers in relation to the social economy, including on Special Contracts Arrangements. Also, as more social enterprises enter the procurement market, tailored advice should be available to those organisations that would be eligible for supported status (i.e. where more than 50% of employees are registered as severely disabled). (Paragraph 212)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The guidance for government purchasers in relation to social economy enterprises is being reviewed. 2. Officials to liaise with DEL¹³ on a review of the guidance on Special Contracts Arrangements. 3. CPD regularly attends the Social Economy Procurement Group facilitated by DETI. 	<p>CPD</p>	<p>Nov-10</p>
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¹³ Department for Employment and Learning

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Maximising Social Benefit			
<p>32. The Committee senses a reticence amongst local commissioners and purchasers to pursue social benefit through procurement, which may be linked to a need for greater clarity both on the Executive’s policy intention in this area and on the definition and measurement of ‘social value’. (Paragraph 244) (See paragraph 245 below)</p>	<p>1. Departments to be encouraged to develop procurement strategies which align to their anti-poverty and social inclusion strategies, including the definition and measurement of social value. 2. CPD and CoPEs will assist in the development and delivery of the procurement strategy in a legally compliant way. (linked to Rec 1)</p>	Executive	Mar-11
<p>33. The Committee recommends that the Executive translates its Programme for Government/Public Service Agreement commitments in this area into a clear policy directive on procuring social benefit, which sets out the priorities that should be pursued by the Procurement Board, the Centres of Procurement Expertise and individual commissioners and purchasers. (Paragraph 245)</p>	<p>A paper setting out proposals will be prepared for consideration by the Procurement Board. (linked to Rec 1)</p>	Executive	Nov-10

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<p>34. The Committee further recommends that this policy directive, which should be underpinned by the necessary legal guidance, is reflected, as appropriate, in departmental business objectives, in the forthcoming Northern Ireland Public Procurement Handbook and in the personal performance objectives of commissioners and procurement professionals. (Paragraph 245)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CPD to liaise with OFMDFM on the implementation of this recommendation. It is for OFMDFM and Departments to lead on the implementation of procuring social benefit and its integration in business plans and the PPAs of commissioners. 2. Procurement practitioners to work to support the delivery of this - in a way that is compliant. 3. The Handbook has been published and will be amended to reflect the Executive policy directive. 	<p>Departments</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>
<p>35. The Committee notes the growing body of guidance on procuring social benefit and, in particular, welcomes the practical toolkit which has been published recently on behalf of the Strategic Investment Board. However, the Committee is concerned that this resource will be underutilised without the necessary policy direction from the Executive. (Paragraph 246)</p>	<p>The SIB¹⁴ toolkit has not yet been published. CPD is in discussions with SIB to consider the toolkit's integration within the procurement policy and guidance framework.</p>	<p>CPD, CoPEs.</p>	<p>n/a</p>

¹⁴ Strategic Investment Board

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<p>36. In the meantime, and given the positive evaluation of the Procurement Board’s Pilot Project on Utilising the Unemployed in Public Contracts, the Committee recommends the use of clauses setting quotas for employing apprentices and the long-term unemployed in all suitable public contracts. (Paragraph 247)</p>	<p>CPD in association with CIFNI is to undertake further detailed work to refine the current measures in light of experience to date and the changing economic environment.</p>	<p>CPD</p>	<p>Nov-10</p>
<p>37. In recognising the need for further empirical evidence on best practice use of social clauses, the Committee recommends that the Central Procurement Directorate makes a rigorous assessment of the social clauses applied in recent construction contracts, with a view to identifying lessons and opportunities for further initiatives in this regard. (Paragraph 247)</p>	<p>1. CPD in conjunction with CIFNI is to undertake further detailed work to refine the current measures in light of experience to date and the changing economic environment. 2. Lessons learned will be assessed with a view to identifying opportunities for further initiatives.</p>	<p>CPD</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>

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<p>38. The Committee is strongly of the view that, in future, value-for-money assessments must strike a balance between short-term monetary considerations and longer-term economic, social and environmental costs and benefits. This is especially important in the context of the constrained public expenditure environment, when departments must not lose sight of the Executive’s strategic priorities. As such, the Committee calls on the Department of Finance and Personnel to put in place a suitable model for systematically measuring, evaluating and incorporating wider social value considerations within economic appraisals and business cases, and which will inform public procurement processes. (Paragraph 253)</p>	<p>DFP to consider this issue in the context of current guidance in this area.</p>	<p>DFP</p>	<p>Mar-11</p>
<p>39. Moreover, the Committee recommends that socially responsible procurement should be included as a scored criterion in the next Centre of Procurement Expertise accreditation exercise. (Paragraph 253)</p>	<p>PPG to consider inclusion of this recommendation in the revised re-accreditation model for CoPEs which will be submitted to the Procurement Board for approval later this year.</p>	<p>Procurement Board</p>	<p>Dec-10</p>

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Building Capacity for Purchasers and Suppliers			
<p>40. The Committee is conscious that capacity building for both purchasers and suppliers will also be vital to maximising the outcomes from public procurement. The Committee is mindful that, whilst the Department of Finance and Personnel, through the Procurement Board, must take the lead in developing the capacity of purchasers, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has lead responsibility in terms of the small business and social economy sectors. (Paragraph 258)</p>	<p>Officials to consult with DETI officials and bring forward proposals to the Procurement Board.</p>	<p>Procurement Board, DETI.</p>	<p>Nov-10</p>
<p>41. The Committee urges the Procurement Board to consider the possibilities for introducing licentiate arrangements for procurement professionals across the public sector, with a view to ensuring greater uniformity in the professional competencies of purchasing staff. (Paragraph 265)</p>	<p>Officials will explore this recommendation and bring forward a paper to the Procurement Board for consideration.</p>	<p>Procurement Board</p>	<p>Jun-11</p>

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<p>42. In addition, the Committee considers that it is essential that the continual professional development of procurement personnel should include awareness of the benefits of doing business with both the small business and the social economy sectors. (Paragraph 265)</p>	<p>Officials to consider this recommendation and bring forward proposals to the Procurement Board for consideration.</p>	<p>Procurement Board</p>	<p>Jun-11</p>
<p>43. The Committee calls on the Minister of Finance and Personnel to liaise with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to ensure that sufficient funding is in place for measures to build the capacity of smaller enterprises to access the public sector supply chain. (Paragraph 274)</p>	<p>DFP officials to consult with DETI officials.</p>	<p>DFP, DETI,</p>	<p>Nov-10</p>
<p>44. The Committee sees a vital role for the Central Procurement Directorate in contributing to procurement training and development for both small and medium sized enterprises and social economy enterprises and will wish to be apprised of plans for taking this forward. (Paragraph 274)</p>	<p>CPD to consult with DETI officials regarding its contribution to the training and development of suppliers.</p>	<p>DFP, DETI,</p>	<p>Jun-11</p>

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<p>45. The Committee endorses the concept of a "Procurement Exchange Programme" and urges the Procurement Board to bring forward options on how this might be developed so as to facilitate cross-sectoral training and knowledge transfer across the public sector and the private sector. (Paragraph 277)</p>	<p>PPG to consider this recommendation and bring forward proposals to the Procurement Board for consideration.</p>	<p>Procurement Board</p>	<p>Jun-11</p>
Local Government Procurement			
<p>46. In welcoming moves towards a more collaborative approach to local authority procurement, the Committee considers that, in the event of the proposed new local authority Centre of Procurement Expertise being established, then appropriate linkages should be developed with the central government procurement structures. Whilst recognising the independence and autonomy of local councils, the Committee urges greater synergy between central and local government purchasing policy and practice, with a view to achieving consistency in the application of good practice procurement across the public sector. (Paragraph 287)</p>	<p>Officials to monitor developments in local authorities' procurement in the context of the RPA¹⁵ and to identify opportunities for greater synergy.</p>	<p>CPD</p>	<p>n/a</p>

¹⁵ Review of Public Administration

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Collaborative Procurement and Efficiencies			
<p>47. The Committee concludes that there is scope for more strategic co-ordination of the public procurement landscape in Northern Ireland to realise efficiencies, not only between central and local government but also in terms of arms-length public bodies. Moreover, the Committee proposes that the Executive explores opportunities to achieve additional efficiencies through collaborative government procurement on a North-South and East-West basis. (Paragraph 295)</p>	<p>Officials to explore this recommendation and bring forward proposals on how this might be taken forward.</p>	<p>DFP Minister, Executive</p>	<p>Sep-11</p>
<p>48. The Committee reiterates its call for a new target to be set for achieving further efficiencies from public procurement, to include a monetary value and baseline for such savings, with an associated implementation plan which links to individual departmental efficiency delivery plans. (Paragraph 296)</p>	<p>Officials to explore this recommendation and bring forward proposals on how it might be taken forward.</p>	<p>CPD Procurement Board</p>	<p>Sep-11</p>

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<p>49. In calling for a further efficiency drive through collaborative procurement, the Committee emphasises the need for such collaboration to be co-ordinated at a strategic level by the Procurement Board to avoid counterproductive localised efficiencies being pursued which have an adverse effect on the efficiency of the wider public sector and/or are detrimental to the local economy. (Paragraph 297)</p>	<p>Officials to explore this recommendation and bring forward proposals on how it might be taken forward.</p>	<p>CPD Procurement Board</p>	<p>Sep-11</p>
<p>50. The Committee recommends that, in reviewing the data capture and management information systems within Centres of Procurement Expertise, the Procurement Board also considers the position more widely across departments to ensure that robust systems are in place to facilitate evidence-based decision making in terms of the identification and monitoring of procurement efficiencies. (Paragraph 298)</p>	<p>Officials to consider this recommendation and bring forward proposals to the Procurement Board for consideration.</p>	<p>CPD Procurement Board</p>	<p>Sep-11</p>

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Litigation and Lessons Learned			
<p>51. Given the cost of litigation and the associated disruption to capital projects and other procurement exercises, the Committee believes that a conciliatory approach is needed in resolving procurement conflicts and considers that the absence of an independent mediator between purchaser and supplier is a key deficiency within the procurement process in Northern Ireland. As such, the Committee recommends that the Procurement Board urgently examines the possibility of providing for a "Supply Chain Ombudsman" function in Northern Ireland, which would, amongst other things, fulfil this important mediation role. The Committee also believes that the proposal for licentiate arrangements for procurement professionals could help to reduce the level of litigation arising from failure to meet legal obligations. (Paragraph 312)</p>	<p>Officials will consider the recommendation in consultation with legal advisers and report to the Procurement Board .</p>	<p>Procurement Board</p>	<p>Nov-10</p>

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Public Procurement Governance Arrangements			
52. The Committee calls on the Procurement Board to bring forward options for strengthening and formalising the relationship between the Central Procurement Directorate and the other Centres of Procurement Expertise, with a view to ensuring consistency in applying good practice procurement in support of the Executive’s key priorities. (Paragraph 319)	Officials to consider this recommendation and bring forward proposals to the Procurement Board for consideration.	Procurement Board	Nov-10