

Future of Procurement

15 Key Points

October 2022

15 Key Points on the Procurement Bill taken from our Breakfast Event

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1. The Bill was introduced in the House of Lords on May 25th and covers England and Wales primarily.
2. The Bill is complex and contains 116 clauses and over 13 parts and 11 schedules. It is currently subject to c. 500 proposed amendments.
3. The government's big desire is to try to simplify public sector procurement and streamline it after the UK's exit from the EU. It wants greater flexibility and to cut red tape.
4. The four main overarching themes are: to speed up and simplify the public sector procurement process; to place value for money at the heart of the procurement process; to give greater opportunities for small businesses and social enterprises to innovate in public service; and to improve public benefit.
5. The bill requires the government to publish the key performance indicators (KPIs) for all public sector contracts. Politicians are currently discussing whether some of the KPIs should be uniform in terms of the wording and/or whether there should be a framework for some form of standardisation.
6. The Bill will allow the public to hold the government accountable for the quality of the services it procures and the most interesting themes of the bill are around risk transfer, innovation, quality, and value for money.
7. The Bill aims to better allow suppliers to compete on a level playing field. This would increase competition and save the government money. It seeks to improve training in procurement for both government and suppliers as part of the transformation.
8. The panel discussed how they would like the Bill to enable an independent body to step in to in-flight procurements and try to anticipate challenges at an early stage.
9. The Bill does not currently cover NHS procurement which is a big omission.
10. The bill focuses on the supply side, but it also needs to look at the buyer side, as there is room for change and improvement on that side as well.
11. A culture of transparency and accountability will be necessary to ensure that suppliers are not seen as "the enemy".
12. In order to improve the efficiency of the bidding process for government contracts, it is suggested that a unit be established which is independent of the authority and can act on complaints from suppliers.
13. The Federation of Small Businesses' policy director provided an overview of the organization's quarterly confidence survey results, noting that the most recent score is the worst in 10 years.
14. The panel discussed how better data could be used to make better decisions by both suppliers and buyers, and how the public sector can take on more risk to improve outcomes.
15. Some concerns have been raised about the Bill including around over-transparency stifling innovation.