



NEWS RELEASE

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Reform in public procurement - professionals lead the way

One of the country's most prominent public sector procurement figures has challenged local authorities to increase outsourcing and make procurement more efficient.

Steve Holland, Director of the Regional Centres of Excellence National Procurement Programme, addressed hundreds of delegates at this year's ninth annual Society of Procurement Officers in Local Government (SOPO) conference and exhibition, held in London this week.

Urging councils to review their current processes, he said: "The vast majority of activity currently taking place at local authority level should be migrated to a much smaller level of organisations - releasing time and ensuring that directors of services begin to listen to heads of procurement. By combining the procurement of commonly-used goods and services it will enable procurement practitioners to focus on other newer and challenging areas of procurement activity within the authorities."

Hundreds of procurement professionals from across the UK attended the two-day event, which was also the setting for the presentation of the 2006 SOPO Awards dinner. These are the only awards specifically focused on procurement within the local government sector and are highly regarded within the sector.

Peter Howarth, SOPO Chief Executive, praised the standard of submissions: "The volume and quality of the submissions received this year has surpassed that of any previous year and while there can only be one winner in each category, each and every submission is worthy of merit."

The facilitation of accreditation services was one of the many topical issues discussed. SOPO has been working in partnership with BiP Solutions Ltd to create a pre-qualification service for buyers and suppliers, and the new Select Accredit service was demonstrated to an expectant audience. SOPO has endorsed the Select Accredit system, which will put the Society at the heart of delivering efficiency savings for local government and their suppliers.

Ron Burges, CEO of BiP Solutions, said: "The public sector needs assurance that potential suppliers are suitable to tender for their contract opportunities and we are confident that Select Accredit will afford buyers and suppliers alike an increased confidence when entering into the tendering process."

With delegates learning that, by working with stakeholders, good procurement is a vital ingredient in the sustainability agenda, this year's SOPO conference was voted a huge success.

Summing up, David Pointon, SOPO Chairman, said: "There is a clear change and efficiency agenda emerging out of all government departments and SOPO members are the frontline troops delivering improvements in efficiency and reducing costs across all local authorities. This year's conference was an outstanding success, once again emphasising the role SOPO has to play in public procurement."