



NEWS RELEASE

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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 Accredited service was demonstrated to an expectant audience. SOPO has endorsed the Select Accredited 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 Accredited 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."

To view pictures from the event please click:
<http://www.sopo.org/resources/sopoconf06pics/index.htm>

ENDS

Notes for editors:

Winners of SOPO Awards 2006:

County Council Category: Hertfordshire County Council - a new approach to the provision of school milk to primary schools across Hertfordshire

Single Tier Authority Category: London Borough of Southwark - a series of workshops to raise the profile of procurement generally within the authority, and in particular to highlight a number of key messages to ensure best practice

District Council Category: St Edmundsbury Borough Council - Procurement DR-IVE (Dynamic Review – Innovation Value Enterprise)

Others Category: South Yorkshire Decent Homes Efficiency Consortium - harnessing the benefits of collaborative procurement

About SOPO:

- Representing over 2400 members, SOPO provides area networks and forums and produces guidance on best practice
- Its aim is to advise local authorities throughout England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland on all purchasing and supplies matters of national/general interest, and represent its members on other bodies to promote the Society and its aims
- Through membership of SOPO, procurement officers join together to share best practice and influence the national agenda on how "Best Value" is to be achieved

Useful links:

SOPO
BiP Solutions

www.sopo.org
www.bipsolutions.com

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