

The best must get better, procurement professionals are challenged

One of the UK's most senior civil servants has challenged professionals working in procurement to raise their game in order to meet tough new government efficiency targets.

David Smith, Commercial Director at the Department for Works and Pensions, was addressing more than 200 delegates from the public and private sectors at the London Contracts and Supplies Group's annual conference, entitled 'Strong and Prosperous Procurement', on Thursday 24 May 2007.

Mr Smith urged his audience: "We are here to ensure the taxpayer gets best value for money.

"While several key areas in procurement have improved over the past 20 years, we face our toughest challenge ever in the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. The challenges facing us include demanding efficiency and spend targets and there is a significant role for the procurement function in delivering this challenge.

"However, we need to collaborate and address smarter procurement, demand management and getting more from our suppliers: no matter what has improved, more of the same will NOT be enough."

This year's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07), due to be announced later this year, will present public sector buying departments with a number of challenges, including the movement of 4000 posts from London and the South East to elsewhere in the UK. It was one of the major issues of discussion at the conference, which was held at the Marriott Grosvenor Square and organised by BiP Solutions Ltd.

Richard Parsons, Chairman of the LCSG, said: "David Smith has quite rightly urged those working within the procurement sector to raise their game in view of the challenges that lie ahead.

"Delegates attending agree that procurement in the public sector will see its profile raised over the coming months and we must collaborate to address this. The conference has been a great success in terms of bringing those involved together to share ideas and experience of best practice and I look forward to seeing this knowledge put into effect."