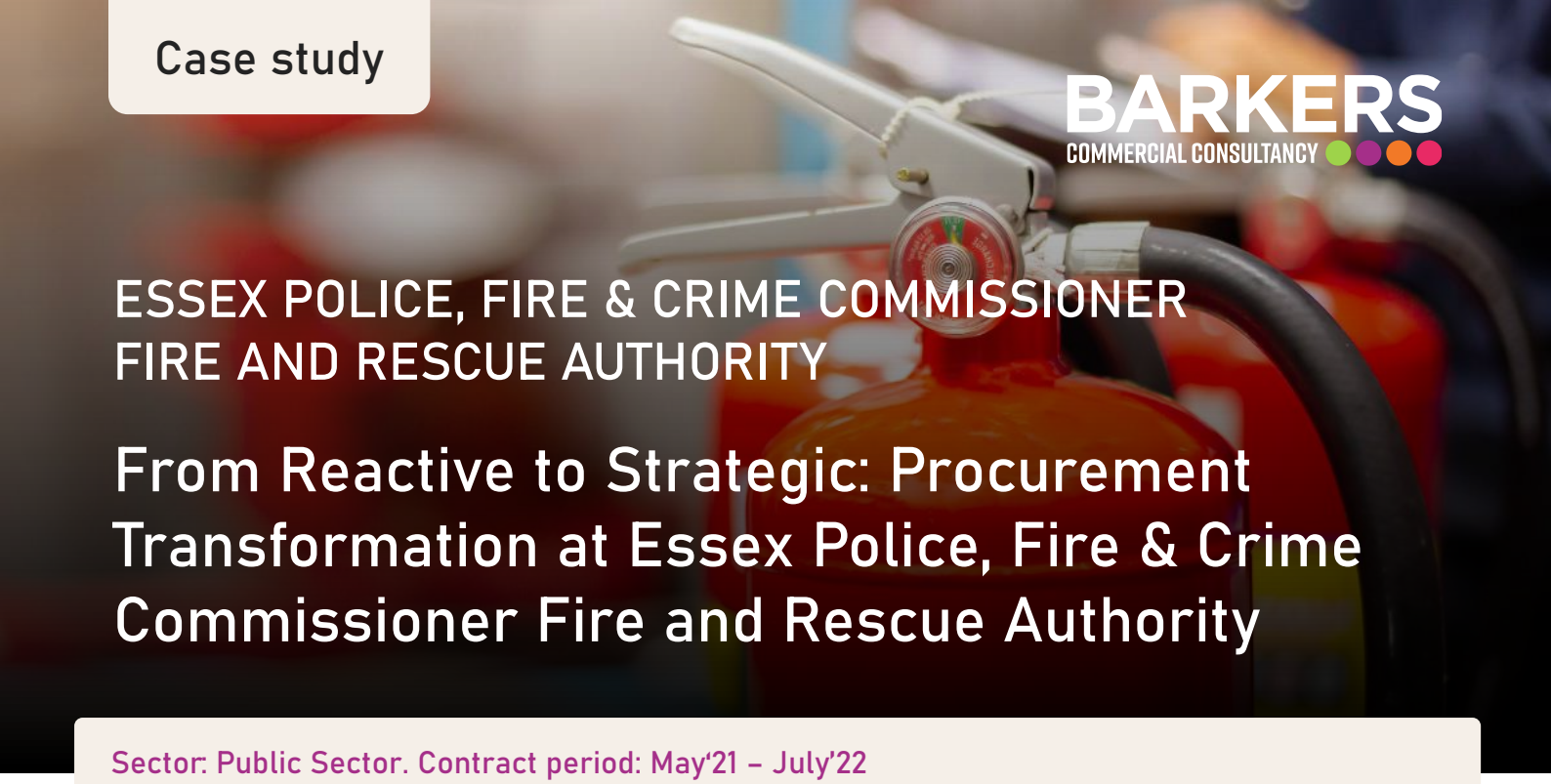
Case study

BARKERS COMMERCIAL CONSULTANCY



ESSEX POLICE, FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

From Reactive to Strategic: Procurement Transformation at Essex Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority

Sector: Public Sector. Contract period: May'21 – July'22

Modern public service demands smarter procurement. Essex Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority partnered with Barkers to transform their procurement function from reactive operations to strategic impact—delivering value, efficiency, and measurable results.

Summary

Barkers carried out a thorough audit of the Essex Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (Essex PFCC) procurement department, identifying multiple areas for improvement and confirming that a major transformation was needed. We provided commercial and procurement advisory support to help the team transition from a tactical procurement function to a strategic Category Management structure.

In addition, Barkers mentored client staff, facilitated knowledge transfer, and supported leadership with practical advice to ensure the new structure was embedded successfully.

Business Challenge

Essex PFCC needed support to evolve their procurement team into a strategic category management function while enhancing stakeholder relationships and demonstrating organisational capability.

Key objectives included:

1. Implementing a category management structure, moving away from reactive, day-to-day procurement.
2. Strategically reviewing and implementing new FM service contracts, including grounds maintenance and waste management.
3. Engaging senior operational leads and reporting category performance to the SLT and Commissioner level.
4. Establishing a robust contract management framework.
5. Upskilling the newly formed category management team.
6. Completing all internal RSM audit actions.
7. Ensuring internal audit actions were addressed.

This programme was delivered against a backdrop of recruitment challenges and a limited pool of credible candidates. There was also ongoing pressure to update the contracts register, establish a contract pipeline, and ensure compliance across the organisation.

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Our solution

Barkers deployed an experienced senior procurement consultant to lead the programme, providing guidance, advice, and practical support to ensure a smooth transition. Recognising the scrutiny of a high-profile public service, we prioritised building a high-performing procurement team capable of delivering value-for-money services for the Fire Commissioner.

Key activities included:

- Producing the first procurement dashboard report, which was highly praised by the Commissioner.
- Guiding the team in developing and presenting category plans to senior leadership.
- Setting up a contract management framework with supporting policies, tools, and templates.
- Conducting
- analysis of FM services, leading to Essex PFCC joining Seven Forces collaboration contracts, achieving savings, supplier consolidation, and improved performance regimes.
- Mentoring the newly promoted Category Management Manager to ensure a smooth transition into their strategic role.
- Maintaining weekly progress reporting for complete transparency and accountability.

The results

As a result of Barkers' strategic support and hands-on guidance, Essex PFCC now has a fully transformed procurement function, capable of delivering strategic value, improved compliance, and measurable outcomes. Key achievements include:

- New category management structure and resourcing in place.
- Category plans, toolkit, and dashboard reporting implemented.
- Contract management framework and supporting tools established.
- Delivery of key policies, including MDS and Supply Chain Code of Contract.
- £268k social value achieved across two new FM collaborative contracts.
- Completion of all internal audit actions.
- Procurement team fully upskilled, positioned for ongoing strategic impact.