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Excellence in catering procurement

Wirral Borough Council

For Wirral Council, one of the biggest benefits of buying school meal ingredients through TUCO is the time it frees up for catering and procurement staff. Having frameworks already set up and knowing that food safety standards, EU compliance and sustainability are taken care of has proved invaluable.

Wirral Council is working on a big idea to boost efficiencies for its Metro catering service.

Providing 12,000 school meals every day to children in the borough, it's the ambition of Wirral Council procurement officer Keith Sailes to begin trialling the appointment of just one supplier for the entire school catering operation in 2015.

"The roll out of free school meals for all key stage 1 children prompted a full strategic review of Wirral Council's current approach to school catering. This resulted in the council starting to look at using one supplier for everything."

"By doing this you save in all areas. You give the volume to one supplier so there will be some cashable savings. However it is the efficiencies of the service that was the driving focus of this

strategic review. There will be reduced deliveries to each school every day and the administration costs will be less. There will be a reduction in the number of invoices and hopefully most of these transactions will be undertaken online. And finally Wirral Council's carbon footprint will be less."

The council's procurement team and senior catering officer have entered into a dialogue with a preferred supplier after an extensive evaluation of the current TUCO frameworks and a benchmarking exercise. This supplier can provide everything Wirral Council need for their school catering.

The provider was found via TUCO, the catering consortium that has been procuring

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– Keith Sailes, Wirral Council



school meal ingredients for Wirral Council since 2008. TUCO also purchases £100m worth of goods and services for in-house catering teams at 27 other local authorities and 340 universities and colleges. This considerable buying power means that TUCO are able to generate high levels of value for money for local authorities.

A wide range of 17 catering frameworks are available for school meal services to buy from. Councils can choose from 182 suppliers across these agreements. For Keith, having TUCO's legally compliant frameworks already prepared is a major advantage.

"Rather than doing a big procurement exercise, it's all set up to use. This reduces the effort. It's a quick win for us."



What's on the menu?

Wirral Council spent a total of £1,884,604 on catering through TUCO from April 2013 to March 2014. Approximately 75% of this total spend went towards school meals.

Frameworks Used	Total Spent	% Saving	Savings Total
Frozen	£459,179	12.24%	£56,203
Grocery	£772,483	7.00%	£54,073
Fruit & Vegetables	£309,281	10.00%	£30,928
Meat & Poultry	£95,953	6.68%	£6,409
Milk & Bread	£157,424	3.70%	£5,824
Alcohol	£69,554	4.00%	£2,782
Soft Drinks	£7,813	21.23%	£1,658
Light Equipment	£12,466	5.50%	£685
Water	£451	5.64%	£25
Grand Total	£1,884,604		£158,587



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– Keith Sailes, Wirral Council



Cutting the amount of time spent by the procurement and catering teams on purchasing food for school meals is a key reason why Wirral have worked with TUCO for the past six years.

“Before we joined, the council was doing its own procurement exercises. But, with the expanding role of our procurement department, our time is really stretched. The beauty of using TUCO is that I know it’s a legally compliant framework. We run either mini competitions or call-off from the framework. This frees up my time so I can concentrate on other work areas.”

Making things easy for its members is a big priority for TUCO. Information on supplier accreditation, EU compliance and price lists are all online. This makes the review and selection process quick and simple.

In fact, it’s so simple that procurement officer Keith Sailes often doesn’t need to speak to anyone at TUCO for months on end.

“When we use the framework process we don’t need much involvement from the TUCO team. We just jump on the framework. I speak to them occasionally but I don’t need too much because they have put it all in place. I find the frameworks really easy to use.”

Another benefit is the focus TUCO put on

sustainability. Local providers are encouraged to tender, reducing carbon emissions. Each framework is compliant with environmental legislation and strict quality assurance standards are in place for animal welfare and production.

Keith Sailes also feels assured by TUCO’s food safety procedures. He describes the help he got from TUCO during the horse meat scandal. “They released a variety of information about food safety – tying in with fears around horse meat and also E.coli. I have every confidence that TUCO have everything in hand. They really know what they’re doing.”

Indeed, when the horse meat scandal broke, TUCO provided evidence of the provenance of all meat bought by members. Every supplier on a TUCO framework has their food safety procedures thoroughly investigated and they are only appointed if they achieve an audit standard.

For procurement officer Keith Sailes, knowing Wirral Council’s school catering service is in safe hands is critical. “I know I can carry on with other jobs because, with TUCO, everything is quality assured to high levels.”

“We’re confident that working with TUCO is delivering an all-round value for money package for Wirral.”

SCHOOL MEALS IN WIRRAL – WHO’S BEING SERVED?

- ▶ **64** primary schools
- ▶ **8** secondary schools
- ▶ **5** primary special schools
- ▶ Total of **12,000** meals per day



If you would like to find out how **TUCO** can support your council’s catering department, call us: **0161 713 3420**, email us: **info@tuco.org** or visit **www.tuco.org/buy**


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