

Doing business with the Council



Introduction

This guide has been produced to explain how to go about trading with the Council. It sets out policies and procedures the Council has to follow, how to find out about business opportunities, what the Council is looking for, processes that suppliers have to follow and useful contact details.

This guide is intended to enable you to feel confident in approaching the Council for business and to enable you to maximise your opportunity to obtain business from the Council.

The Council buys goods, work and services from a range of suppliers. Contracts vary from small one-off purchases to large contracts to provide services on behalf of the Council. Generally each individual department has direct responsibility for their purchasing activity, with the exception of a few areas where spend is organised centrally e.g. print, some IT services and products, business travel, stationery and catering.

For more information contact the Procurement Team by telephone on 01900 702521 or email procurement@allerdale.gov.uk.

Policies and Procedures

The Councils Procurement and Contract arrangements aim to ensure that the Council achieves value for money from the money it spends. It also ensures fair and transparent procedures and equal treatment of all potential suppliers.

All Council officers must follow procedures set out by the Councils Financial Regulations and relevant UK and EU law. All Contracts under the Public Contracts 2006 (Public Procurement Directive) require that all public sector purchasing decisions are based on value for money (via competition).

Procurement Process

Our procurement team helps other council departments buy goods and pay for works and services in a manner which is:

- open
- transparent
- allows potential suppliers to bid from a level playing field

The process we follow depends on the value of the procurement as outlined in the Councils Financial Regulations.

Email invoices

If you would like to email your invoices, please send them to invoice.section@allderdale.gov.uk

The Chest

We aim to advertise all opportunities on the North West e-tendering portal [The Chest](#).

All suppliers interested in doing business with us are encouraged to [register on the Chest](#). See Suppliers Guidance to The Chest.

You can also search for other opportunities on the Chest.

If you are having problems registering or searching for opportunities on the Chest, contact the Procurement Team by telephone on 01900 702521 or email procurement@allderdale.gov.uk.

Frameworks

We also make use of national frameworks when it is appropriate such as:

- [Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation](#)
- [Crown Commercial Services](#)

Tendering

There are several approaches to tendering. A request for quotations or invitation to tender is not an offer to buy but an invitation to the supplier to supply information (in a quotation) or make an offer to sell (expressed in a tender bid).

Purchasing decisions are complex and not confined only to price, the lowest price is not always the most suitable and may not provide the goods and services the Council would want.

Examples of issues the Council would consider before awarding a contract are:

- Fitness for purpose (quality, suitability, for the task undertaken etc.)
- Delivery and availability against price
- Cost of ownership
- Whole lifecycle costs including spare parts, maintenance costs and projected down time
- On costs (transport and storage)
- Sustainability, environmental and social responsibilities of the Council.

Quotations to Tender

Potential suppliers are either invited to tender as either a shortlisting procedure or it might be an open procedure. Assessment criteria – stated in the ITT, allows contractors to define their offer accurately and to see exactly how this will be assessed and against what criteria. Each tender will contain a detailed 'specification' which will provide the main element of what will be assessed. However, assuming the tender meets the specification, other aspects will also be evaluated these include:

Status of the Company including but not limited to; company profile, financial viability, quality assurance procedures and status , purchasing card capability, technical ability, health and safety, equal opportunity for staff.

Operational Considerations including but not limited to, delivery times, environmental consideration, sales and marketing support, management information,

Goods Services Offered, including but not limited to, extent to which they meet the minimum standard, quantities above the minimum standard that offer Value for Money

Costs, including but not limited to, initial price, any conditions, warranties and guarantees offered, support costs.

Method Statement These are usually asked for and give the contractor an opportunity to show how they will provide the goods or services. They give the Council an insight into the contractor's methods of operation. Areas that can be included in a method statement are;

- Their method of working
- How they intend to deliver the contract and what timescales
- How it will be resourced
- Their definition of quality
- Company policies (environmental, health and safety, energy efficiency)
- Proposed sub - contractors
- Transition/ start up arrangements
- Training
- Proposals for continuous improvement

Quality

The Council expects suppliers to provide goods and services that are 'fit for purpose' and free from defects or problems. We will look to see how suppliers approach quality both within their organisation and in producing their goods and services. The Council will evaluate tenderers on this and look for quality standards required by law or manufacturers recommended standards where appropriate and necessary.

Decision Making

The Council is not bound to accept the lowest price and in many cases the council will look for the 'Most Economically Advantageous Tender known as MEAT'. Value criteria to determine 'economic advantage' or MEAT might include – quality, deliverability within targets, technical merit, innovation, risk sharing, health and safety or environmental performance. MEAT criteria will always be directly relevant to the purpose and performance of the contract

Criteria for award of the contract will be included in the contract notices and will be meaningfully ranked and weighted so suppliers know what priority is being given to non-price factors. The decisions on scoring are usually made by a panel. There will be an initial sift to remove applications that fail basic criteria. The remaining applications are passed on to the panel who,

follow the scoring criteria laid out in the tender. Then the lowest scoring ones are rejected and the highest scoring ones are accepted. All panels spend most of their time talking about the ones in the middle.

Scoring Matrix

Tenders are scored comparatively against each other and a weighted score matrix is devised for each tender exercise which will show how each offer compares against the specification and assessment criteria. Consequently, this will also show relative comparisons between tenders.

Interviews/presentations

Tenders are frequently invited for interviews at which they are encouraged to make presentations in support of their bids. This gives the contractor and the council the opportunity to ensure that every aspect of the tender has been understood and allows the contractor to ask further questions.

Reporting Mechanism

The decision to award a contract does not rest solely with the officers involved in the evaluation of the tender. Some high value or especially significant contracts, the decision will be included elected members. At any stage the tender process is open to scrutiny by the Councils Internal Audit Section.

Debrief

All unsuccessful tenderers will be advised as to why their bid was unsuccessful. It is a useful way of finding out how a company can improve its business opportunities.

There are a number of different Tender Procedures

Open Procedure - open to any potential bidder on the basis of widely advertised tender (The Chest is the e-portal we use to advertise tenders). No requirement for pre-qualification. All bids are evaluated against requirements set out in the ITT and associated documents.

Selected or Restrictive Procedure – this involves adding a pre-tender questionnaire. A relatively small number of suppliers are then shortlisted for invitation to tender. Suppliers then have 37 days (maximum) to register interest and submit the required information for prequalification.

Negotiated Procedure – involves the selection of a small number of suppliers to enter into direct negotiation with the buyer. Prospective bidders have 37 days (maximum) to register their interest to negotiate. A minimum of three parties selected to be negotiated. At the end of the negotiated process, suppliers submit their best and final offers.

Competitive Dialogue (for large complex contracts) a process conducted in successive stages to identify potential solutions and gradually to reduce the tenders to be negotiated.

Subject to certain exceptions, Allerdale Borough Council will use an **Open Tendering procedure**; advertising the invitation to tender according to rules designed to secure maximum publicity across the EU where thresholds are met.

Documents that will be included in an invitation to tender

- An Invitation to Tender (ITT)
- Instructions to tenderers
- A pricing document and /or form of tender,
- The specification and criteria for award
- Allerdale Contract terms and conditions ,
- Deadlines for submissions
- Pre addressed tender return label (if not using e- procurement and the Chest)

Documents that will be included with a Request for Quote

- The contact details of purchaser
- Reference number to use in reply and date by which to return
- The quality and description of goods or services required and criteria for evaluation if using MEAT
- The place and date of delivery
- Allerdale standard T & Cs ,
- Terms of payment

What the Council Looks for

The Council will, at any stage of the tendering process, request information so we can assess the potential bidder's suitability to supply the Council and satisfy the requirements of the contract. Spending tax payers money we need to be sure the companies we deal with are legitimate, discrete trading organisations, have acceptable levels of economic and financial standing, offer value for money and promote good practices in the areas of; health and safety, environmental protection, quality, diversity and equal opportunities.

Proposals will be evaluated on a common basis and the method of evaluation shall be determined in advance and notified to potential suppliers.

Alignment around our vision and values

Allerdale has a 5 year Plan.

"The Plan has five key themes. They are:

- Tackling inequality
- Strengthening our economy
- Enhancing our towns
- Improving health and well-being
- Creating a sustainable business

The councils seeks suppliers which are aligned with the vision and values in our Council Plan.

For further information on the Council Plan please see our website www.allerdale.gov.uk

Allerdale will look to achieve the ‘5 Rights’ in all Procurement that is:

All purchasing should be ***right quality***, and the ***right quantity***, delivered to the ***right place***, at the ***right time*** as well as being the ***right price***. But as well as this the Council will look for other dimensions to be considered, such as risk, sustainability, total cost and stakeholder engagement.

Health and Safety

The Council expects its suppliers to have appropriate measures in place to manage their Health and Safety. When evaluating tenders the Council will look at organisations approach to Health and Safety both within the company and in respect of the product or service they are selling. The Council may also request a copy of tenderers Health and Safety policy and details of how Health and Safety issues are managed.

Environmental

All businesses make an environmental footprint on the world in some way or other; it is therefore Allerdale Borough Councils goal to work with suppliers and the supply chain to minimise our negative environmental impact. The Council supports sustainable, environmentally friendly practices and expects suppliers to take into account the environmental impact of their products and services at all stages of their lifecycle. The Council, when evaluating its tenders, will consider what action suppliers take to follow environmentally sustainable practices.

Legislation

The Council is aware of its responsibilities under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 1998, and General Data Protection Regulation (May 2018), Human Rights Act 1998, Modern Slavery Act 2015, Equality Act 2010, Race Relations Act 1996, Sex Discrimination Act 1975, The Competition Act 1998 and the Enterprise Act 2016, Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. The Council expects suppliers to be aware of and comply with their duties and may ask for supplier’s policies or position on issues such as diversity, equal opportunities, etc. as part of the tendering process.

References

The Council may request to see details of referees. Suppliers will be expected to provide these details which the Council may follow up before a contract is awarded.

Contracts

The Council requires all procurements to have a written contract in place or contract under seal where the Council's legal team decides. All contract terms and conditions must be finalised before the supply, service or works begin and the Council may require specific clauses to be included in its agreements with suppliers.

Supporting Local Area

Where appropriate the Council supports and encourages local suppliers to compete for Council work. In a recent analysis of expenditure carried out by the Council, figures revealed that approximately 65% of our expenditure is spent in Cumbria (suppliers using invoice address within Allerdale was 40%) 35% of spend was with organisations having an invoice address outside Cumbria.

Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) came into force in January 2005 and under it any member of the public, company, charity or organisation, may make a request for information to Allerdale Borough Council. A request can be made for any recorded information which is held by the authority or by persons providing services for us, and that information must be provided **unless** it is covered by one of the Act's 23 exemptions.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 is enforceable by the Information Commissioner, for further information please visit www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents

For any queries on Freedom of Information, please contact:

Telephone 01900 702898

email foi@allerdale.gov.uk

Future requirements in line with new GDPR (The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 will come into force on 28 May 2018, and apply to any organisation that controls and processes personal data.)

Contact

For any queries on any aspect of this guide, please contact:

Procurement Team

Telephone 01900 702521

email procurement@allerdale.gov.uk

Write Allerdale Borough Council, Allerdale House, Workington, Cumbria, CA14 3YJ

We can produce this document in large print format, on audio tape and in other languages if you ask us. If you would like a copy in one of these formats please contact the Corporate Procurement Team

