

Greenwich Council

**Bidding for a Tender
Information for Suppliers**



September
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Information for suppliers

Introduction

This guide has been produced to assist organisations who wish to bid for contracts with Greenwich Council and to provide an insight into our tender procedures for contracts for works, services and goods. It also provides an explanation of relevant legislation and council policy when tendering for contracts and how this influences our requirements from potential service providers and contractors. In addition it highlights some links to useful web sites.

Greenwich Council aims to deliver high quality services which will best meet the current and future needs of local people. The council is committed to a mixed economy since it believes that services should be delivered by the organisations in the public, private or voluntary sector, that are best placed to meet the council's needs.

To fulfil this goal, we are continually developing our procurement procedures so that they are innovative and flexible. We listen to stakeholder's views so that we are able to provide real opportunities for service users to benefit from the council working with other organisations.

Best Value

In April 2000, the government introduced a new regime for all councils called Best Value. To comply with this all council services must be periodically reviewed to improve the economy, quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the way in which they are provided. In order to do this we must ensure that the way we deliver our services is based on the opinions of our customers and on the assessment of our performance in relation to other public authorities.

Once a review has been carried out and all the evidence gathered, a decision is made on the best way forward. If this decision requires changes to part or the whole of an area of service provision which involves a tendering procedure, we have a duty to ensure that any contract awarded demonstrates Best Value and continuous improvement.

To achieve this we recognise that alternative service providers can often add value to the process based on their own expertise and experience and we will work together with them to draw this out via our contractual arrangements.

In addition to the Best Value regime the Council also has a duty to assess every contract on the basis of "Value for Money". This means that contracts are now no longer awarded on the basis of lowest price alone but are also assessed on the optimum combination of whole life costs and the quality required to meet the user's needs.

Whole life cost assessment includes the initial acquisition costs and takes into consideration indirect and administration costs as well as residual values and disposal costs if appropriate. However, lower value contracts may be awarded on the basis of 'the Most Economically Advantageous Tender' (MEAT).

The National Procurement Strategy

In 2003 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in conjunction with the Local Government Association published the National Procurement Strategy which sets out the procurement vision for the public sector. The aim of this is to provide better public services, achieve continuous improvement, obtain better value for money and operate a mixed economy which includes small firms, social enterprises, minority businesses and the voluntary and community sector.

The targets set by government which are to be achieved by local authorities include:

- develop and implement a procurement strategy
- be involved with a regional centre of excellence
- identify opportunities for collaboration with neighbouring councils
- implement an appropriate e-Procurement solution to stimulate markets and achieve community benefits
- inform the local business community how to do business with the council

It provides for the establishment of a number of regional centres of excellence each of which is tasked with the promotion of e-procurement, the establishing of collaborative procurement and the development of procurement professionals throughout the region.

Rules and regulations

As a local authority, there are regulations at European, National and Local level which we need to follow when buying goods and services. When approved lists are established, a basic guide is as follows:

European rules

Where the estimated total aggregated value of a contract is expected to exceed the relevant EU financial threshold, currently (2007) at £144.371 for goods and services and £3,611.319 for public works contracts, it must be advertised in the Official Journal of The European Union (OJEU). Furthermore, rules which promote non-discriminatory and transparent competition must also be followed. European Procurement Directives stipulate time scales that must be observed. These are intended to ensure that reasonable time is allowed to enable interested parties to respond to adverts and to prepare submissions. If there is any conflict between European, National or Local council rules and regulations the European Directives will always prevail. Initially, if the value and service require it, a contract notice will be placed in OJEU.

The OJEU notice will provide information on the proposed contractual arrangements, the evaluation criteria that will be applied; timescales etc. and asks organisations to contact us to formally register their interest by completing a pre-qualification questionnaire. Applicants will be shortlisted based on the published criteria in order to compile a tender list. The invitation to tender documents will then be sent out which will give details of the evaluation procedure incorporating both quality and price.

Tenders will be evaluated according to the criteria published and following on from this a contract will be awarded. Before any contract is signed a stand-still period of 10 days has to be observed after which the contract becomes legally binding. Within 48 days of contract award an Award Notice will be published in OJEU giving brief details of the company selected.

National rules

Whilst there is no general requirement for local authorities to tender out specified services, we have a duty under Best Value as previously described to ensure that our services are competitive and are delivered by the best provider. The national procurement policy is based upon fair, transparent and open competition and the procedures ensure that the process is auditable and reasonable as far as it is commercially possible.

Council rules

The council has to follow its own procurement rules which regulate how it conducts its procurement. In summary, these rules govern how contracts of different values must be advertised, specified, submitted, evaluated and reported to members.

How to find out about our contracts

Procurement activity is undertaken by different service areas within the council. The Council will endeavour to publish all major forthcoming contracts on the internet at www.supply2.gov.uk and on the Greenwich council website. These websites identify current contract opportunities and time scales. We also publish standard documents such as Contract Standing Orders, Pre-qualification questionnaire and Instructions to Tenderers on this website and make them publicly available. Terms and Conditions of Contract are also available on the web site.

Contract publicity

Tenders for contracts with a value estimated to exceed £100,000 will be advertised in the local press and/or appropriate trade journals. Where the contract value is estimated to be above the European threshold of £144.371 for supplies or services and £3,611.319 for public works, they must also be advertised in the OJEU. OJEU notices appear in the supplement to the Official Journal of the European Union which is available in electronic form only, free of charge, via the internet at www.euroguide.org or www.ted.europa.eu

To respond to any contract advertised by Greenwich Council you will need to confirm this to us by letter, fax, e-mail or via our web site. For contracts over a certain value we will forward a pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) to you or you can download from our website prior to issuing the invitation to tender. This is to shortlist potential bidders in order to save time and effort being unnecessarily spent on completing tenders by contractors.

The PQQ also allows us to assess an organisation's suitability to supply Greenwich Council. The information we ask for in the PQQ gives us basic information about your organisation and to verify that it can be identified as a legitimate discrete trading organisation. We need to know the registered address of the office, company registration number and company group information. We must also know that the firm has acceptable levels of economic and financial standing and can demonstrate to us that it has the knowledge and skills required to provide the service on behalf of the council. Furthermore, we expect that it promotes good practices in areas of racial equality, environmental protection, sustainability and health and safety the areas assessed can be summarised as follows: -

Financial information

In this section you are asked for certain financial information relating to your company for each of the last three years. Private limited companies and public limited companies must submit fully audited accounts as registered with Companies House. Other applicants should forward copies of financial statements, business plans or a certified statement of turnover. This information is used to assess the financial position of your company in relation to the size of the contract. We also require information to check you are registered (if appropriate) for tax and that you will comply with the council's insurance requirements.

Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976 as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment Act) 2000, Equal Opportunities and the Disabilities Discrimination Act 1995 as amended

The City Council strongly supports equal opportunity, equal access and positive outcomes for all sections of the community. We strive to ensure that the standards we expect internally are supported by firms and organisations who carry out work for the council and we assess a firm's compliance with the Race Relations Act 1976 as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and awareness of the Code of Practice laid down by the Commission for Racial Equality. You are asked to respond to questions about how you include racial equality issues in your employment practices and if you have five or more employees you are required to submit an equal opportunities policy. We also want you to confirm that you are fully compliant with the Disabilities Discrimination Act 1995 and we ask you to tell us whether you have any other schemes in place that promote and support any of these Acts or whether you have achieved the "Investors in People" award.

Environment, sustainability and fair trade

Greenwich Council is committed to sustainable development of the Borough, a fundamental objective of which is the protection and enhancement of the environment. In order to promote this we have a sustainability strategy which aims to improve not only our environmental performance but also the social and economic well-being and quality of life within the Borough. We therefore expect organisations from whom we buy goods, services and works to meet similar levels of environmental care and commitment and to support the council's aims and visions.

For more information on the council's environmental vision visit the Council website. This site sets out the council policies to assist our contractors to understand our criteria for assessing sustainable and environmental performance.

Health and safety

All organisations are required to submit a Health and Safety Policy, signed by a senior person, which refers to the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. If you are a principal contractor where Contractors (Design and Management) (CDM) regulations apply you will be required to supply a model safety plan and a risk assessment as a further supplementary health and safety requirement. A further requirement of the council is that all contractors must be registered and approved under the Contractors Health and Safety Scheme (CHAS) or an equivalent approved and registered scheme.

Experience and technical ability

Further information we ask for in the application form is used to assess whether you have the relevant experience and technical ability to carry out the categories of work or type of service which you wish to provide. If you are applying to be considered to tender for a specific contract, you will be asked to provide a minimum of three references. We will normally also ask further questions tailored to match the needs of the individual contract and your responses and supporting evidence will be used to assess whether you have the required level of skills and abilities to tender in relation to other interested firms.

Tendering for contracts

If you are successful in your application for a tender or if we are following an open tender procedure, we will forward a set of tender documents to you. These documents will consist of all or some of the following:

- **Letter of invitation**
- **Instructions to tenderers**
- **Tender statement**
- **Specification**
- **Schedule of rates/pricing document**
- **Contract conditions**
- **Quality requirements and method statement questions**
- **Tender evaluation model**
- **Interviews/ Tender evaluation**
- **Contract monitoring**

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 members of the public or any interested party may make a request for information to Greenwich Council. Information contained in your tender documents will be treated as commercially sensitive up to the appointment of the successful tenderer and signing of the contract. The Act requires Greenwich Council to consider the disclosure of any information upon request by members of the public or other interested parties. The onus is on the tenderer to mark any information contained in the tender or contract that is commercially sensitive or is a trade secret and to bring this to the attention of Greenwich Council.

Whistle blowing Policy

Greenwich Council has implemented a Whistle blowing Policy that encourages staff to report any perceived wrong-doings relating to unlawful conduct, financial malpractice or dangers to the public or environment within the council or by contractors engaged by the council.

Business Continuity / Disaster Recovery

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places an additional responsibility upon councils, and other emergency responders, to have in place tried and tested business continuity plans, which are activated following any major event or incident. The Council and all parties with whom they contract are therefore subject to the full set of civil protection duties in cases of emergency. Contractors will be required to

assess the risk of emergencies occurring in relation to their contract and inform the council of any identified risks and how they intend to deal with any emergencies should they occur. Contractors must make available their emergency plans and Business Continuity Management arrangements for inspection by the Council upon reasonable notice.

Other Contacts and Publications

Department of Trade and Industry

(DTI) "TENDERING FOR GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS", a DTI publication gives lots of useful information on tendering for government contracts and the wider public sector and can be accessed and downloaded from the Internet: www.sbs.gov.uk/content/services/tender.pdf or order directly from DTI Publications Tel: 0870-1502 500 email: publications@dti.gsi.gov.uk

Contrax Weekly and Government Opportunities

Two further useful publications are "Contrax Weekly" which is available on-line updated daily, or in hard copy published weekly and "Government Opportunities", which is published on a monthly basis. Both are published by Business Information Publications (BiP). Both publications give details of contracts open to tender for central government departments, local authorities and various other public bodies to get a copy of this publication phone 0141 332 8247 or write to:

Government Opportunities
BiP Solutions
Park House,
300 Glasgow Road
Shawfield,
Glasgow G73 1SQ
Internet site: www.govopps.co.uk

Supply2.gov.uk

This is the first portal of call to consolidate access to lower-value opportunities from across the whole of the UK public sector. It opens up the market to all types of business including small businesses, start-up companies and social enterprises to search and view open lower-value contract opportunities, typically under £100,000, and promote themselves to the UK public sector. You can register your business for free on www.supply2.gov.uk