



Selling To Hartlepool Borough Council

A Guide for Suppliers, Service Providers & Contractors

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Selling To Hartlepool Borough Council.....	1
Introduction	3
About Us	4
Our Procurement Procedures & Regulations	5
How to Find Out About Our Contract Opportunities	6
Understanding Our Tendering Process	7
The Freedom of Information Act.....	11
Business Development Advice & Opportunities	12
Contacts for Further Information & Advice	13
On-Line Information.....	14

Introduction

This guide has been produced to assist suppliers, service providers & contractors who wish to supply Hartlepool Borough Council with goods, services or works.

Hartlepool Borough Council encourages competition and welcomes bids from new and established suppliers, both large and small. Contracts are awarded on a value for money basis and whilst the Council cannot discriminate in favour of local suppliers, we are committed to supporting the growth and development of local small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and local voluntary and community organisations through the Council's procurement activity.

About Us

Established in 1996, Hartlepool Borough Council is the second smallest unitary council in England. We currently serve 92,590 people ¹ across the borough. As a unitary authority the Council provides a wide range of local government services, from schools and social services to regeneration and refuse collection.

Standards of Conduct

Hartlepool Borough Council aspires to the highest standards of conduct and governance in the discharge of its roles.

There is an expectation that organisations and individuals upon whom the Council relies for the provision of services, or in the discharge of contractual arrangements, will adopt and reflect the Council's General Principles of conduct in their dealings with the Council, its Members and officers and members of the general public who they are serving on behalf of the Council.

Details of these General Principles are provided in the Council's 'Standards & Partners', document which can be accessed on the internet at:

[https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/downloads/file/212/statement - standards and partners](https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/downloads/file/212/statement_-_standards_and_partners)

What We Buy

The Council spends around £60m per annum on supplies, services and works. Given the diverse nature of council services, our requirements are varied, ranging from low value – high volume purchases such as stationary and office supplies, through to high value capital works schemes.

The Council deals with contracts of varying types from one-off purchases to contracts for supplies, services or works that will last for a specific period of time before coming up for renewal.

North East Procurement Organisation

The Council is a member of the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) which is a local government purchasing consortium of 12 councils in the north east of England and NEPO contracts have an annual value in excess of £90m.

NEPO provides a means of pooling procurement knowledge and expertise and of gaining savings through aggregated contracts and co-ordinated procurement.

Where the Council has agreed to be involved in a particular NEPO contract it will not typically let contracts for similar goods during the lifetime of the NEPO contract.

NEPO operate an internet portal which Hartlepool Borough Council uses to carry out its procurement processes. All organisations wishing to provide goods or services are urged to register on the NEPO Portal as this is a prerequisite to becoming a supplier to the Council. Registration is quick, simple and free of charge and the site can be accessed on the internet at:

<https://www.nepo.org/>

¹ Figure correct as at January 2016

Our Procurement Procedures & Regulations

As a public authority we have a duty to operate in an open and transparent way by allowing the market freedom of opportunity to trade with us. Our procedures for purchasing are known as 'Contract Procedure Rules'.

A summary of our main procurement procedures is set out in the grid below:

	Goods, Materials and Services (excluding Social and other specific services)	Social and other specific services	Works
Contract Value	Proposed Rules	Proposed Rules	Proposed Rules
£0 - £1000	Informal Process – Reasonable Enquiries required Minimum of 1 quotation	Informal Process – Reasonable Enquiries required Minimum of 1 quotation	Informal Process – Reasonable Enquiries required Minimum of 1 quotation
£5,000	At least 2 quotations using Quick Quotes	At least 2 quotations using Quick Quotes	At least 2 quotations using Quick Quotes
	Officers should invite a minimum of 1 local company to quote (where available)		
£60,000	At least 3 quotations using Quick Quotes Officers should invite a minimum of 2 local companies to quote (where available)	At least 3 quotations using Quick Quotes Officers should invite a minimum of 2 local companies to quote (where available)	At least 3 quotations using Quick Quotes
£100,000	At least 4 quotations using Quick Quotes	At least 4 quotations using Quick Quotes	Officers should invite a minimum of 2 local companies to quote (where available)
£189,330	Officers should invite a minimum of 3 local companies to quote (where available)	Officers should invite a minimum of 3 local companies to quote (where available)	At least 4 quotations using Quick Quotes
£663,540	EU procedures Apply	EU 'light touch' procedure Applies	Officers should invite a minimum of 3 local companies to quote (where available)
£4,733,252			EU procedures Apply

NB: Officers are not required to advertise opportunities with a value below the applicable 'EU threshold', although advertising can be undertaken if deemed appropriate.

How to Find Out About Our Contract Opportunities

Existing supply arrangements

Details of the Council's current call-off and framework contracts (including their review dates) can be viewed on the Council's Contract Register.

The Contracts Register can be accessed on the internet at:

http://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20216/procurement/328/hartlepool_borough_councils_contract_register

Forthcoming supply arrangements

Where opportunities are advertised they may appear on the following:

- Council Webpages
- https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20003/business/949/advertisements_for_forthcoming_contracts
- Contracts Finder
- <https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>
- Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU)
- <https://etendering.ted.europa.eu/general/page.html?name=home>

Where an opportunity is advertised, in addition to the publications detailed above, officers may also advertise:

- in one or more local newspapers circulating in the district, and/or
- on the procurement pages of the Council's website
- https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20003/business/949/advertisements_for_forthcoming_contracts
- and/or
- on the Council's chosen procurement portal (<https://www.nepo.org>)
- and/or
- where deemed appropriate, in one or more newspapers or journals circulating among such persons as undertake such contracts

In terms of sub-tender opportunities (i.e. >£1,000 and < EU Thresholds for Goods and Services and >£1,000 < EU Thresholds for Works), quotations will be gathered using the Council's 'Quick Quotes' system.

- Tender opportunities are advertised on the Council's procurement webpages https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20003/business/949/advertisements_for_forthcoming_contracts
- and on the NEPO Portal

Understanding Our Tendering Process

Informal Contract (Quotations) Procedures

The Contract Procedure Rules of the Council's Constitution allow for informal procedures to be employed where contracts are for limited amounts.

Contracts for under this minimum limit (£1,000) may be implemented without undertaking a competitive process so long as reasonable enquiries are made to determine that a price is fair and reasonable.

Contracts for over the minimum limit and below the maximum limit (£4,733,252 for works contracts, £189,330 for goods materials or service contracts and £663,540 for Social and Other Specific services) may be implemented so long as the appropriate number of competitive quotations are obtained using the NEPO Portal.

Formal Contract Procedures

Where the value of the contract is greater than the maximum limit for quotation procedures, the Public Contracts Regulations tendering process must be followed.

Selected Tenderers Lists

We maintain select lists of contractors for specific categories of work. These are used to eliminate the repetitive application of the procurement process, where there is a regular or periodic requirement to invite tenders or quotations.

Our select lists contain suppliers who meet our minimum standards of financial standing, technical competence and Health and Safety (where appropriate). Acceptance onto a select list enables the Council to seek quotations or tenders from those on the list without any further pre-qualification. The lists are periodically reviewed.

Call-Off & Framework Contracts

Many of our supply contracts will be in the form of a 'call-off contract' or 'framework contract'. Call-off contracts allow orders to be placed over the period of the contract to meet the needs of Council departments. Framework contracts allow the Council to identify a number of companies that have successfully met the standards in open competition, which the Council can then place orders with over the period of the framework without the need to use the full competitive procurement process each time.

Price / Performance Contracts

This type of contract is employed where it is appropriate for the contract to be awarded on the basis of a combination of price and performance and for which a price/performance ratio has been determined.

Contractors invited to submit quotations will be required to provide method statements, or similar documents, relevant to the contract (together with other information) with their quotations in order to assess quality issues.

An Agreed Marking Mechanism will be applied to calculate the Price/Performance Score of each quotations submitted, and the contract will be awarded to the contractor with the highest Price/Performance Score.

Partnering Contracts

Where circumstances dictate, the Council may indicate that a contract is to operate as a Partnership Contract. A Partnership Contract is one where the following provisions all apply:

- The establishment of a partnering team.
- The stipulation of a pricing policy, stating the prices to be charged by the contractor.
- A facility for the Council to examine all aspects of the contractors accounts for the contract.
- A Savings Sharing Formula being applied for the sharing between the contractor and the Council of savings achieved within the Partnership Contract.

Contractors invited to submit a quotation/tender will be required to provide details of their proposed overheads, profit element, net project cost and preliminaries costs relevant to the contract with their submission.

Invitation to Quote / Tender Documents

If you are successful in an application for inclusion on a select list, or where we are following an open quotation / tendering procedure, documents will be made available to you via the NEPO Portal. These documents will consist of all or some of the following:

- Instructions to Bidders / Tenderers: provides guidance for completing the documentation including the deadline for quotation / tender submission.
- Specification: sets out what needs to be achieved including policies, procedures or guidelines to be followed.
- Terms and Conditions of Contract: defines how the Council will let contracts and the rules bidders must comply with.
- Form of Offer: your company's agreement to our terms and conditions of quotation / tender and contract.
- Pricing Schedule (Appendix to Form of Offer): the document where your prices should be entered.
- Any relevant supporting information: such as plans, drawings, etc.

Quotation / Tender Evaluation & Contract Award

Returned quotations / tenders will be evaluated against the pre-determined criteria. Evaluation will focus on examining how the proposals will deliver the service (quality) and the cost of the service

(price). The balance between quality and price will depend on the particular service area. Normally the Council will award the contract on the basis of the most economically advantageous quotation / tender. The successful bidder will be notified in writing by letter or official electronic communication.

Debriefing

Within the limits of commercial confidentiality, the Council will always endeavour to offer unsuccessful bidders feed-back on why their bid was has failed. This information can be used to help with any future bids' as being unsuccessful in one contract does not mean that a company will be unsuccessful in future.

NEPO Tenders

All NEPO contracts will be advertised and will be subject to competitive tenders being obtained. Tender documents will provide details of the requirements of the participating authorities. Tenders will be issued under the banner of NEPO.

Other Considerations

Equality & Diversity

The Council strongly supports equal opportunity, equal access and positive outcomes for all sections of the community. The Council aims to ensure that organisations that provide services on behalf of the authority comply with equal opportunities legislation and promote equality of opportunity. It also aims to encourage those organisations and individuals with which it does business to observe and adhere to the principles contained within the Council's Equality & Diversity Policy.

The policy can be accessed on the internet at:

https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20004/council_and_democracy/428/equality_and_diversity

Environment & Sustainability

The Council is committed to protecting our local environment and ensuring a better quality of life for everyone – now and for future generations. In order to promote this, the Council has developed a Sustainable Procurement Policy Statement.

Health & Safety

Depending upon the nature of the goods or services, organisations may be required to complete a Health and Safety questionnaire, which seeks to understand an organisations approach to health and safety and whether this is compliant with the Council's requirements and the applicable legislation.

Social Enterprises / Voluntary and Community Sector

Hartlepool has a large and vibrant Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), with a wide breadth of knowledge, specialisms and understanding, enabling the delivery and provision of a range of services to residents, contributing towards improving quality of life and creating cohesive communities.

It is important therefore that we provide a clear guide to how the Council, its partners and the VCS will work together to aid the development and sustainability of the VCS. The Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy, available on the Council's website, provides a robust framework, which incorporates the principles of the

Compact, providing support and clear guidance on areas such as commissioning and procurement arrangements. We feel that this will support all partners to respond to the current challenges in order to deliver and develop services that are a direct response to local needs.

The Council is committed to supporting its VCS Strategy within the procurement process. The VCS Strategy provides the basis from which the Council can determine its own contribution to the longer term economic and social well-being of the local community. The Council welcomes submissions from Local Community Groups, Voluntary Organisations and other Social Enterprises wherever possible.

The VCS Strategy can be accessed at:

http://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/downloads/file/862/sustainable_community_strategy_for_hartlepoolpdf

The Freedom of Information Act

Hartlepool Borough Council is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. The Act gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities, sets out exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities.

Requests for Information

From January 2005, any person making a request for information to the Council must be informed in writing whether or not the authority holds the information sought and, if so, to have access to that information, subject to exemptions.

Requests must be made in writing to:

Freedom of Information Officer
Legal Services Division
Civic Centre
Hartlepool
TS24 8AY

Email Freedomofinformation@hartlepool.gov.uk

The Council then has 20 working days following receipt of the request to respond.

Impact of FOI on Quotation / Tender Confidentiality

Suppliers bidding for council business should be aware that under FOI the value of contract awards and other information could be disclosed.

However, the FOI Act also provides for certain types of information, including confidential information and commercially sensitive material held by public bodies, to be withheld from disclosure:

- In general, sensitive commercial information is required to be kept confidential at all stages, especially during the periods prior to bid opening, during bid evaluation and after the contract is awarded.
- Suppliers should always highlight in their quotation / tender documentation any information that they would not want disclosed, particularly under FOI.
- Under the EU Directives, certain information can be withheld by buyers, but only under certain circumstances and only with justification.

If the Council was to propose to release information against a supplier's wishes, the supplier has a right to appeal, to the Information Commissioner in the first instance. They can of course seek legal redress.

Business Development Advice & Opportunities

Business Support from Hartlepool Borough Council

The Council, through the Economic Development Team, directly provides a range of Business Support Services to start up in business, grow your existing business or relocate your business to Hartlepool. The team based at the Hartlepool Enterprise Centre offer a single point of contact for all aspects of business support including:

- Advice and guidance to new start businesses
- Financial assistance to start up or expand businesses
- Premises for businesses starting up and expanding
- Networking opportunities with local organisations

For further details, contact the team at the Hartlepool Enterprise Centre on 01429 867677 or visit www.investinhartlepool.co.uk

Contacts for Further Information & Advice

Corporate Procurement Unit

Hartlepool Borough Council
Civic Centre
Hartlepool
TS24 8AY

Email: procurement@hartlepool.gov.uk

Karen Cooper, Procurement Category Manager
Tel: 01429-523009
E-mail: Karen.cooper@hartlepool.gov.uk

Ursula Larkin, Strategic Procurement Manager
Tel: 01429-523238
E-mail: Ursula.larkin@hartlepool.gov.uk

Freedom of Information Advice

Laura Stone
Hartlepool Borough Council
Civic Centre
Victoria Road
Hartlepool TS24 8AY
Tel: 01429 523087
Email: Laura.Stone@hartlepool.gov.uk

Economic Development Advice

Israr Hussain
Economic Development Officer
Hartlepool Borough Council
Hartlepool Enterprise Centre
Brougham Terrace
Hartlepool
TS24 8EY
Tel: 01429 857074
Email: lsrar.hussain@hartlepool.gov.uk

On-Line Information

There is a wide range of information about tendering and public sector procurement on the Internet. These include information from central government departments, non-profit organisations, tender alert service providers and commercial resellers of tender information. Many of these sites are dynamic in that their content is frequently updated to reflect new legislation and current tender opportunities and, for these reasons, they are always worth revisiting. The following list is by no means exhaustive.

Hartlepool Borough Council Website

<https://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/info/20216/procurement>

The Council's website provides a wide range of information in relation to its procurement practices and current contract opportunities.

NEPO Portal

<https://www.nepo.org/>

The NEPO Portal is a free to register portal where a significant number of public sector contract opportunities are advertised. By registering on the Portal, suppliers can make their details available to all 12 north eastern local authorities and a wide range of other public sector organisations.

Contracts Finder

<http://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/>

Contracts Finder is a facility provided by central government. There is now a legal requirement for public sector organisations to advertise business opportunities over a certain threshold on this site.

SIMAP

<http://www.simap.europa.eu/>

SIMAP aims to support an effective Single Market by encouraging suppliers and contracting entities to adopt best practices and use electronic commerce and information technology to provide all the information needed to deliver value for money in public procurement.