



Selling to the Council

A Guide for Suppliers and Contractors



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About Bristol City Council

Bristol is a thriving city in the South West of England. With a community population of over 381,500, Bristol City Council provides a wide range of services, from schools, libraries and leisure centres to housing and refuse collection.

Whether you call it procurement, purchasing, contracting, tendering or buying we spend approximately over £400 million a year on obtaining a vast range of supplies, works and services from the external market.

About this Guide

Naturally many organisations will want to sell their services and supplies to the council, so we have put together this Selling to the Council Guide to assist suppliers and contractors who wish to supply Bristol City Council with goods and services, by:

- Outlining the rules that the council must follow
- Explaining where to find details of opportunities to supply the council
- Explaining how to tender for the council's business
- Explaining what is expected of you when undertaking work for us

How is procurement organised?

This authority has a Corporate Commissioning & Procurement Service team responsible for developing the Council's procurement strategy, policy, good practice and procedures to drive best value for money procurement. It is also responsible for Corporate Purchasing Arrangements for the majority of supplies¹, which are used commonly across the council.

Responsibility for more specialist service² and works³ procurements lies with individual departments who have specific knowledge regarding the requirements. These departments are:

¹ contracts for the purchase, lease, rental or hire purchase of goods and for any installation of those goods, e.g. office stationery, security equipment, vehicles.

² includes nearly all services, which could be commissioned by public sector organisations, e.g. window cleaning, catering, grounds maintenance.

³ contracts involving building and civil engineering works, e.g. housing repairs, highways maintenance.

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- Children and Young People's Services
- City Development
- Corporate Services
- Deputy Chief Executive's
- Health and Social Care
- Neighbourhoods
- Transformation

Contracts let by the council can take a number of forms, including:

Corporate Purchasing Arrangements: An arrangement where terms and conditions are agreed with the provider for certain services, supplies or works which allows call-offs to be made without obligation to the supplier. These are not mandatory arrangements with a single supplier.

One-off Contracts: These contracts meet specific needs/individual requirements.

Renewable Contracts: These are contracts for services required regularly. They are generally let over a longer period e.g. 5 years or more, and will be regularly reviewed and renewed.

Standing Lists: Some departments maintain approved lists of companies who are considered able to carry out the work to the necessary standards and will be invited to tender for specific work or services. The standing lists are used to draw up shortlists of companies to be invited to tender for specific contracts as and when they arise. Being accepted on a standing list does not guarantee the award of contracts.

Standing Lists are only used below the EU threshold, and in the main, are for works contracts.

Term Tenders: These are tenders accepted from several contractors from the standing list, to carry out repetitive tasks for a period of time. Work is then issued to these contractors as and when it is available. Any amount or value of work cannot be guaranteed.

Commissioning: Arrangements where the council and another public body are working together to arrange for something to be provided, and particularly applies to social services contracts.

Concessions: An arrangement whereby the council grants the contractor the right to operate a contract, within stipulated parameters and to benefit from the profit made from the operation.

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Framework Agreements: used to procure batches of similar works, supplies or services which the Council expects to need over a period of time, but where it has no certainty as to what sort of quantity or details it may require.

What Rules & Regulations must be followed?

As a local authority there are regulations, which the council has to follow when procuring supplies, works and services. It is vital that if you wish to contract with Bristol City Council you are fully aware of the rules and regulations, which govern the way we operate.

The following table summarises the rules that must be followed, depending on the value of the purchase:

Value	Process	Advertising
Up to 15,000	Single written Quotation (where possible using Quick Quote on COPS)	
£15,000 to £100,000	Using BEPS either obtain at least three Quotations or invite at least three Candidates from an Approved List	Advertising is discretionary subject to the type of procurement. Adverts may be placed in local press and trade journals
£100,000 to EU Threshold	A minimum of 4 tenders will be invited, usually through a restricted 2-stage process	Adverts are placed in the most appropriate media, which may include local and national newspapers and relevant trade journals
Above £156,442	EU Procurement Directives apply (See the following section: 'What are EU Procurement Directives?')	Adverts will be placed in Official Journal of the European Union, and any other appropriate media to ensure competition and sufficient coverage

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What are EU Procurement Directives?

We have a legal requirement to comply with the EU Procurement Directives, which govern the way in which public sector procurement is conducted for contracts over certain specified thresholds. The directives and regulations require the council to follow detailed procedures for all procurements above these financial thresholds.

The thresholds for 2010/2012 are:

Services	Supplies	Works
£156,442	£156,442	£3,927,260
€ 193,000	€ 193,000	€ 4,845,000

Note: the thresholds are reviewed every 2 years. The next review is due in January 2012.

Under the EU Procurement Directives, Bristol City Council can conduct their procurement using one of three processes:

Open – any organisation can express an interest and request tender documents.

Restricted – a two-stage process. Organisations expressing an interest undergo an initial pre-qualification assessment. Only the most suitable applicants are invited to tender.

This is by far the most common process (a similar 2-stage process is also used for procurement below the EU threshold).

Negotiated – organisations expressing an interest undergo an initial pre-qualification assessment. The council, under limited circumstances, will then negotiate with one or two suitable contractors.

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Where our procurements exceed the above thresholds, we must follow these basic requirements:

- Decide which of the three processes needs to be used;
- Publish a Tender Notice in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) to give all EU suppliers an equal opportunity to tender;
- Invite tenders according to the procedure being used (open, restricted, negotiated), taking account of the minimum timescales imposed, to ensure that reasonable time is given to respond to adverts and prepare submissions;
- Select a suitable contractor using the criteria published in the Tender Notice;
- Place a Contract Award Notice in OJEU.
- Follow a mandatory 10 day standstill process for OJEU contracts

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Procurement Process: Shortlist Stage

How do I find out about opportunities?

Potential suppliers should check local and national newspapers and trade journals for advertisements of contracts and standing lists/term tenders on a regular basis.

Details of forthcoming contracts also appear on our procurement system - <https://procurement.bristol.gov.uk/supplierselfservice/>. Expressions of interest can be made through the system, and draft tender documentation accessed.

Contracts over EU thresholds are advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). Potential contractors/suppliers should review the official EU website (<http://ted.europa.eu/TED/main/HomePage.do>) regularly to obtain details of potential forthcoming opportunities.

How do I apply for contracts?

The contract notice or advertisement will advise contractors/suppliers of the procedure to be followed for that particular contract. In the majority of cases potential tenderers will need to register on our procurement system and complete a pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ), which will be used to assess their suitability to supply the council and their ability to satisfy the contract. It is essential that you supply all of the information requested and respond by the due date.

What information do I need to provide?

In a pre-qualification questionnaire you will be asked to provide basic details about your organisation to verify that it can be identified as a legitimate trading organisation, that it has acceptable levels of economic and financial standing, and that it promotes good practice in areas of equal opportunities, protecting the environment and health and safety.

Financial Information - companies will be asked for certain financial information as we need to be sure that you can meet the requirement for the life of the contract.

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Experience and Technical Ability - We will ask for further information to assess whether a company has the relevant experience, resources and technical ability to carry out the categories of work and to provide the type and quality of service required. In most cases it is necessary to provide details of similar contracts held over recent years and to provide contact details of referees. Some further questions may be asked tailored to the needs of the individual contracts.

Organisation - We will ask about your organisational structure to establish whether you have the appropriate resources to fulfil the contract.

Insurances - You are also asked to provide assurances regarding insurance cover, as BCC has a responsibility to ensure that organisations with which it contracts carry any statutory insurances.

Equal Opportunities - Bristol City Council is committed to eliminating inequalities in all functions, including procurement. The council strives to ensure that their services are equally accessible and appropriate to the differing needs of all community sectors, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, disability, age or sexuality. This section will ask how the company includes racial equality provisions in its employment and service provision.

Environment - Bristol City Council is committed to protecting the local environment and taking responsibility for minimising the wider environmental effects of its procurement decisions. The council expects its contractors and suppliers to meet a similar level of commitment and will seek information to determine the commitment from potential suppliers.

Health and Safety - Bristol City Council is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for its employees, service users and those affected by its operations. Suppliers and contractors can play a key role in achieving this and prior to carrying out work for the council; information will be sought concerning tenderers' safety policies and operational safety procedures. You will be expected to know how to manage health and safety in your area of work and to accept responsibility for it.

Business Continuity - The Council is required under The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to ensure that contractors providing critical services are able to maintain service delivery in the event of an

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emergency. Critical services are services that the Council provides which play a significant role in supporting the safety and welfare of the community.

We therefore ask contractors whether they have identified the key risks to their business and whether measures have been put in place to mitigate disruption to service continuity in the event of an emergency.

More information about Business Continuity and details of how to obtain further assistance is available at <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/bcm>

Guidance on completing PQQs is available on our website:
<http://www.bristol.gov.uk/procurement>

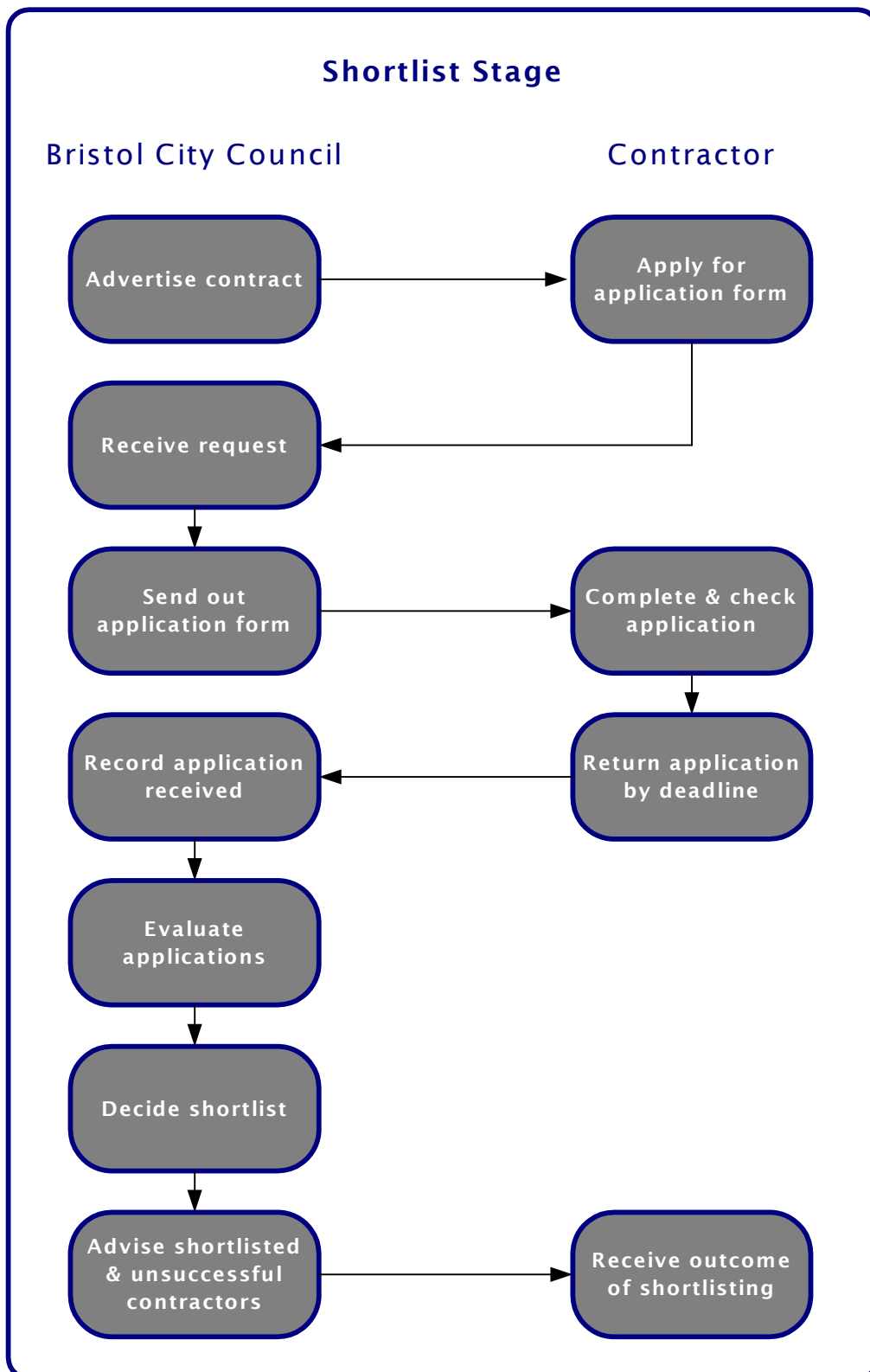
It is essential that pre-qualification documentation is returned by the date and time stipulated; the procurement system will not allow you to submit any documentation after the deadline. All PQQ responses are opened at the same time in order to ensure a fair process.

When applying for **standing lists** contractors will go through the shortlist stage as described. Their details will be held by the council, until specific contracts come up, when a selection of contractors will be invited to tender, on a strict rotation basis.

The shortlist stage is summarised in the flow chart on the following page.

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Procurement Process: Tender Stage

What if I am invited to tender?

Applicants who have been shortlisted after evaluation of the PPQ will receive a set of tender documents, which will consist of all or some of the following:

Letter of invitation – this advises when and where tenders should be submitted.

Instructions to tenderers – provides guidance for completing tender documentation.

Specification – sets out what needs to be achieved and includes policies, procedures and guidelines that need to be followed. Tenderers are expected to tender on the basis of this specification, which will include performance targets or criteria to be met in delivering the services, supplies or works.

Pricing Schedule – the document where you enter all your prices.

Terms & Conditions – defines how Bristol City Council will let the contract, the rules tenderers must comply with and the relationship between the council and the selected contractor.

Tender evaluation criteria – advises how the tender submission will be evaluated and the contract awarded.

Any additional supporting information – such as Bristol City Council policies that tenderers are expected to follow.

Tenders must be returned by the date given. The system will not allow you to submit tenders after the deadline. This is because all tender documents must be opened at the same time in order to ensure a fair process.

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What are the Council's expectations of contractors?

Bristol City Council needs to ensure that we offer value for money services to Bristol's taxpayers. We therefore expect excellent performance from contractors/suppliers, demonstrated through:

Low total cost - not only low price, but also low administration costs and low costs related to quality. Suppliers should consider the total, whole life costs of supply when putting together their tenders.

Quality - contractors/suppliers are expected to provide services, supplies and works to an appropriate standard of quality, to meet the needs set out in the specification.

Adherence to council policies and protocols - we are committed to delivering our services, with consideration for a number of issues including sustainability, equalities, health and safety, and look for suppliers/contractors who are committed to helping us achieve our aims in these respects.

Integrity - honesty is expected in all dealings between the council and its contractors in addition to other relevant parties. In particular it is a criminal offence to give or offer any gift, inducement or reward to a local government official. It is Bristol City Council's policy not to accept inducements, gifts or hospitality. Tenderers should note that they risk being excluded from the procurement process for failing to observe this requirement.

Innovation - suppliers are encouraged to be innovative and suggest new ideas to add value, continuously striving to improve their performance.

Communication - suppliers are expected to maintain good communications with the council throughout the contract.

How else might I be evaluated?

The tender documents may include Method Statements and/or Case Studies, which are used to determine how contractors would manage the service or deal with particular issues. In responding to method statements and case studies contractors are expected to show what methods and procedures they propose to use in undertaking the work, showing initiative and innovation in delivering the service.

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At any time during the tender process you may be invited to give a presentation or attend an interview as part of your submission. The council may also conduct site visits to see first hand how tenderers organise their work.

How is the contract awarded?

Tender evaluation is always carried out in a comprehensive, equitable, auditable and transparent manner. To ensure fairness the evaluation criteria and method will be clearly defined before tender documents are issued.

The council must be sure that in selecting a supplier/contractor it is getting value for money and the services will be delivered effectively. Evaluation is therefore based on two key criteria – how the tender proposes to deliver the contract (quality) and the cost of the contract (price). The council are looking for the best balance of quality and price, not just the lowest price. In most cases additional criteria will also be used in evaluating tenderers.

Contracts are awarded to the provider who is considered to offer value for money, having regard to price, quality and best value – sometimes referred to as “most economically advantageous tender” (MEAT), and to be best able to meet the council’s specification. Evaluation of the most economically advantageous tender can incorporate a number of factors including:

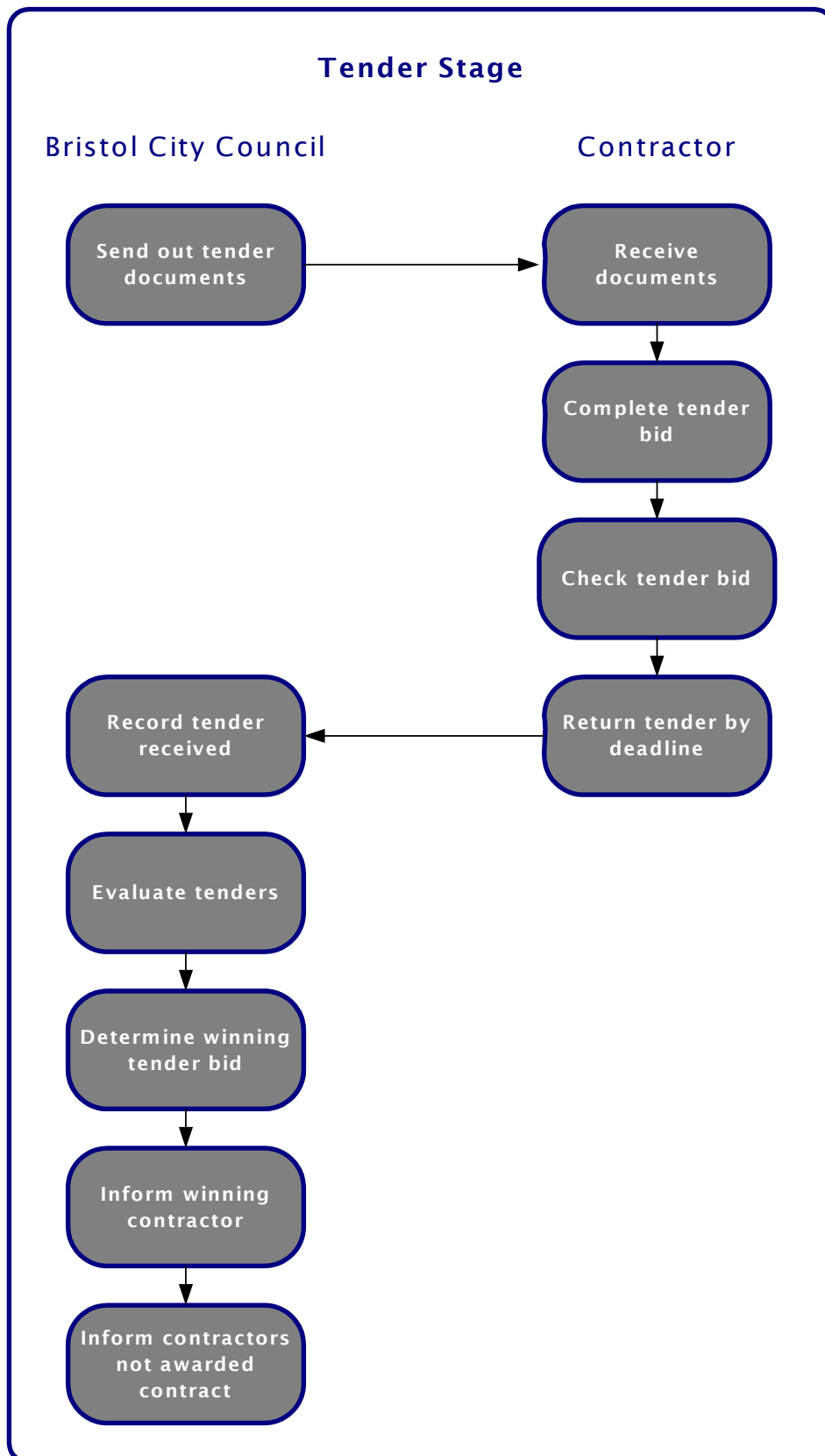
- Financial viability of the tender
- Quality issues
- Technical merit
- After sales service
- Delivery date
- Technical back-up
- Experience
- Competence
- Policy issues such as equalities & sustainability

The criteria to be used will be listed in the tender documents, in order of importance. The weightings of the criteria may also be given.

The tender stage is summarised in the flow chart on the following page.

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Can I get some feedback?

If your tender is unsuccessful you should ask for feedback from the contracting department. Within the limits of confidentiality, we can provide tenderers with feedback on which aspects of their bid were strongest and which were weakest, along with advice on improving and developing for the future.

Under the EU directives you are legally entitled to feedback from us. A mandatory 10-day standstill period must be observed for EU contracts before a contract is signed

Being unsuccessful in one contract does not mean you will be unsuccessful in future. You should use the feedback to help you improve for upcoming opportunities.

How are contracts monitored?

You will be expected to provide the service in accordance with the requirements set out in the contract documentation and your proposals to carry out the contract.

In order to ensure that we are continually providing value for money services to our community, suppliers and contractors working for the council are regularly monitored to assess their compliance with pre-defined performance criteria. The contract conditions are strictly applied, and explanations sought if a contractor fails to perform to the levels required.

Is Bristol City Council using e-Procurement?

Bristol City Council is committed to developing e-procurement as a major tool in delivering its procurement strategy. From tendering for contracts to placing orders, the application of e-procurement can achieve efficiency savings for both the council and their suppliers.

The Bristol E-Procurement System (BEPS), is available @ <https://procurement.bristol.gov.uk/supplierselfservice>, and this allows suppliers to register to access past, current and future contract information, and submit bids electronically. They can also keep their profile updated, including the goods and services they offer, and supporting documentation such as brochures and price lists.

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Where can I get further information?

If you are seeking information regarding a specific contract please use the contact details provided in the advert/contract notice and tendering details.

General information on the tendering process and procurement at Bristol City Council can be obtained from The Corporate Procurement Unit, Floor 5, B Bond Warehouse, Smeaton Road, Ashton, Bristol, BS1 6EE, or by e-mail: corporate.procurement@bristol.gov.uk

Should you have any comments or feedback on this guide we would be happy to hear from you, as we are always looking to develop the advice, guidance and support we offer to potential contractors. Please contact us by e-mailing corporate.procurement@bristol.gov.uk