

Stockton Parish Council

Purchasing Procedure

The Council will ensure that everything it does as part of a tender is fair, transparent and does not discriminate for/against any supplier. This applies to all procurement, whatever the value. Its actions are subject to scrutiny under the Freedom of Information Act as well as our own financial regulations.

The following is a short summary of the key requirements of a tender.

Calculate the Contract Value

This will either be the actual stand-alone cost if a one-off purchase of goods or the ongoing costs if it is a service contract.

Write the specification and evaluation criteria and legal terms and conditions of contract

Write a comprehensive specification detailing what outcomes are required, what the essential requirements are, how you will measure performance, how you will manage the contract and most importantly what evaluation criteria and weighting you will use when you get the tenders back. You must tell suppliers how you will conduct the tender exercise, what criteria they will be measured against (price and quality or other factors such as their health and safety record) and the rules around canvassing officers or councillors during the tender period.

When considering evaluation of your contract, price, product quality, durability and other factors may be important to you. However, if the tender is for a service provision, don't forget to include performance indicators, that will tell you whether the organisation is doing a good job or not. For this you might use references from other companies as an important component of your evaluation criteria.

Evaluating the Tender

During the period the tender is out awaiting bids, various questions may arise. If you answer a question for one bidder, then you should ensure that all the other known bidders receive the question and the answer you have provided. No bidder should be able to claim that someone else had additional knowledge before the tender submission period.

Conversely, there will be some information that bidders provide you with that they regard as confidential. They may for example have given you an added value option that other tenderers may not have thought of. This information should not be shared between bidders. It is the Council that must determine whether an issue is deemed confidential or not (as bidders will always say that everything is commercially confidential.)

You can only apply those evaluation criteria you put into the tender documents. You cannot use other criteria or introduce something new or different after tenders have been received. Equally you cannot accept tenders or amendments after the published deadline unless there are very special reasons for doing so - you could be challenged by other suppliers.

You should not evaluate alone - ensure you do it with at least two, preferably three people, or at a formal council meeting, which may need to be a part two meeting, excluding the public and the press.

Score individually then come together to produce a moderated score. You should do all this in writing and use a pre-agreed scoring template that allows you to record comments on each bid.

Award Stage

Once the evaluation is completed you will be ready to award the contract.

The contract award should be in writing and reference the terms and conditions of contract issued at the tender stage. The full contract will include the specification, the bid and the terms and conditions of contract.

Good practice is to provide all unsuccessful bidders with feedback on their bids, you should do this as soon as possible after the winning bidder is decided. Actual pricing or any other commercial in confidence information must not be disclosed amongst bidders but you must tell them their position relative to the winning tender.

This policy was amended by Stockton Parish Council on 19th June 2023 and will be reviewed in three years' time, at the AGM