

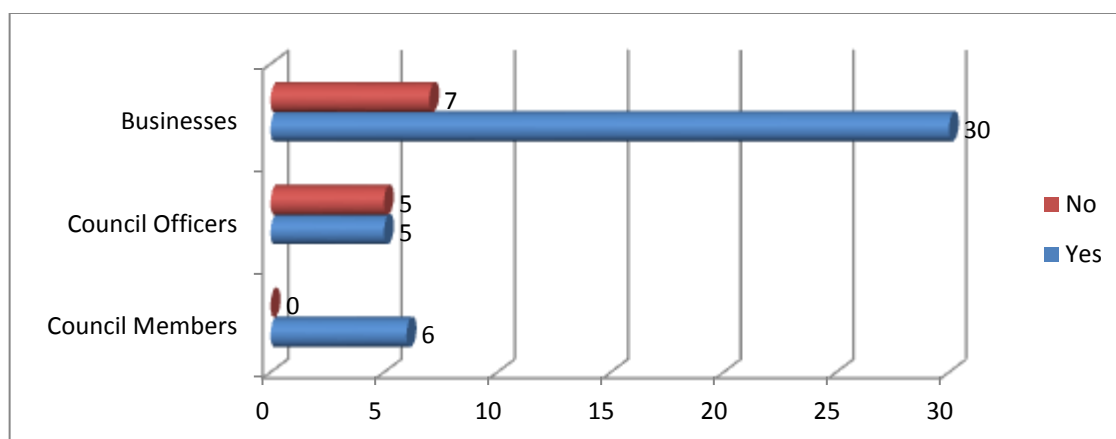
# Publication of Summary Consultation Results for Corporate Procurement Strategy 2016-2020

## Introduction

SBC received 93 responses to the consultation for the Corporate Procurement Strategy 2016-2020 from Businesses, Council Member and Officers. This was a good response in comparison to the 15 received when the last strategy consultation was issued in 2014.

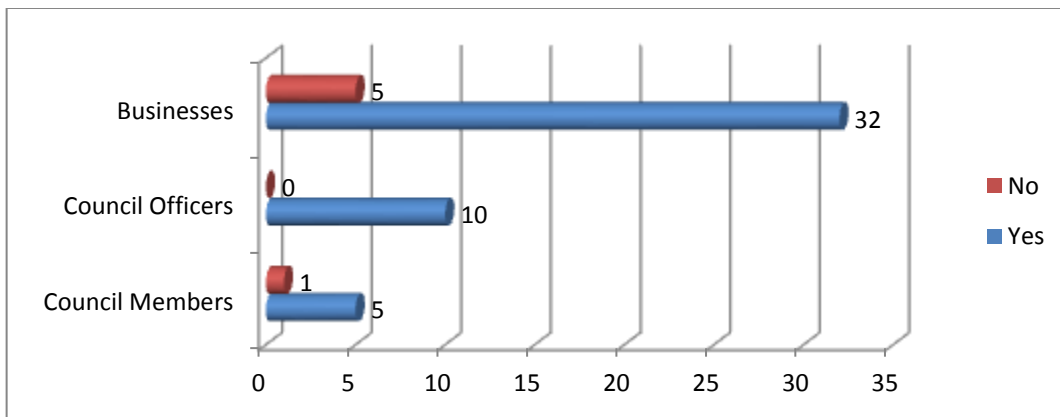
Graphs showing responses to key questions of interest to businesses have been included below:

**Having read the draft strategy, do you think it will encourage local and small businesses to bid for council contracts?**



There were some concerns from Council Officers around small businesses not being able to cope with the procurement process, with issues around the E-tendering system and supplier's capacity to undertake some projects due to their workload. Corporate Procurement will be working with the Council Officers to ensure that the procurement process is straightforward and will encourage small businesses to bid for our opportunities; Corporate Procurement will offer training to those departments who need support to work with our local and small businesses to help this to happen.

**Do you think the strategy supports Stevenage Borough Council in being fair and open to all potential suppliers?**



**Please tell us why you haven't bid for a contract with Stevenage Borough Council in the last five years (choose all that apply)**



This question was asked to businesses only. Nine of the businesses that responded to this question selected more than one of the options given. A total of twelve businesses responded to say that they were not made aware of when contracts are open to tender, this will be addressed by encouraging businesses to register on Supply Hertfordshire and receive alerts for their business types, registering with Supply Hertfordshire will also help the businesses that have not been invited to quote because they will be registered on so can be selected to quote. For businesses that are unaware or are unfamiliar with the process, guidance will be provided by the updating of the 'Selling to the Council' guide.

Analysis of responses has been carried out and it is apparent that comments fall mainly into four key themes:

- **Small Business**  
(Getting a foot in the door, complex and time-consuming processes, tenders not small business friendly)
- **Local Business**  
(Favour local businesses, support with tendering skills)
- **Publication / Pre-Market**  
(Finding out about where opportunities exist, speaking to businesses)
- **Internal Training and Development**  
(Concerns about e-tendering system and roll out use for band 2 quotation processes)

Some key comments from the key themes have been identified below; a copy of a fuller version of the consultation information is available on request from [procurement@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:procurement@stevenage.gov.uk)

## Small Business

### Summarised selection of comments from responders:

- Let us know what is available to bid on.
- Make getting onto a tender list possible for small business
- Concerns that large companies are favoured
- Procurement is too costly, time consuming and complex
- Make the qualification documents less onerous.
- Determine a standard all can meet.
- Too much requirement for written policy.
- Tender was not small business friendly, it required subscription and auditing by big organisations.

### Summary of Council response to comments:

Opportunities are broken into lots where appropriate to encourage smaller bidders.

There are supply chain opportunities are for smaller businesses within larger contracts.

Tenders over £75,000 are advertised on Supply Hertfordshire – <http://www.supplyhertfordshire.uk/> and quotations under £75,000 are issued through Intend.

Thresholds at selection are set at an appropriate level for the opportunity to ensure bidders have the capacity to supply.

SBC has simplified procurement documentation and procedures in last couple of years to reduce complexity/time and help small/local businesses. We only ask for documents we need. We allow self-certification of certain documents. Memberships and audit requirements are only asked for when necessary to ensure quality standards are met.

### Actions:

Encourage businesses to register on Supply Hertfordshire and receive alerts for their business types – utilise expertise of Chamber of Commerce and Biz4Biz to communicate information about Supply Hertfordshire to their business contacts. An email reminder to register will also go out to all consultation respondents.

SBC to update 'Selling to the Council Guide' to help explain the processes required in public sector procurement.

Procurement officers to be reminded to consider the levels required for each opportunity so as not to exclude smaller suppliers unnecessarily and that written policies/accreditation/ standards/memberships should be requested only where necessary and relevant.

Encourage procurement officers to get suppliers who want to do business with the Council to sign up to Supply Hertfordshire – <http://www.supplyhertfordshire.uk/>

## **Local Businesses**

### Summarised selection of comments from responders:

- Use more local business especially for smaller tenders
- Start with SG Postcodes as a priority
- It would be good to have local companies
- Be seen to use local business
- The strategy/process needs to be more flexible to take into account the skill set of local businesses
- Have a 'premium local' category to select suppliers from for quotes (suppliers that pay their rates directly to SBC)
- Have a target of % supplies for Stevenage/North Herts business

### Summary of Council response to comments:

Contract Standing Orders have recently been updated to say that the Council's members wish to support the growth of local businesses and staff may wish to invite local businesses to quote for opportunities.

Procurement legislation means we can't favour suppliers based on their location however we encourage local suppliers to bid for opportunities. The Council has a responsibility to the tax payer to ensure that we procure using the most economically advantageous offer, this helps to protect the Council's services.

SBC will support local businesses through meet the buyer events and updating the 'Selling to the Council Guide'. There is a legal requirement to be fair and transparent to all suppliers.

### Actions:

Encourage procuring officers to invite local suppliers when quoting for opportunities.

Encourage procuring officers to carry out pre-market engagement to help local businesses understand the Council's requirements.

Encourage Council Officers to get local suppliers wanting to do business with the Council to sign up to the Supply Hertfordshire website.

## Publication/Pre-Market

### Summarised selection of comments from responders:

- Make opportunities more public either through social media or local press with workshops or meet the buyer events to ensure businesses are kept up to date with tenders. Businesses want to know what opportunities exist for their product/service.
- Make sure local businesses are made aware of tender opportunities.
- Need more engagement via a forum to listen to feedback in a physical environment not just a survey.
- Research a supplier's background.
- Look at local suppliers ... be more aware of local supplier innovation.
- Tailor the procurement exercise to reflect Q7 'Considering the local economy'
- Useful to provide the URL for Supply Hertfordshire within the Strategy.

### Summary of Council response to comments:

Tenders are published on Supply Hertfordshire & Twitter.

The Council participates in Meet the Buyer events periodically in Stevenage/Hertfordshire

All suppliers can register on Supply Hertfordshire and select the areas they can supply; suppliers will automatically receive an e-mail when a tender has gone out in their line of work. Suppliers can also be selected from Supply Hertfordshire for quotation requests.

Officers can carry out pre-market engagement to understand what suppliers are able to offer prior to starting procurement.

Corporate procurement will include the URL under paragraph 6.2.16 of the strategy.

### Actions:

Encourage procuring officers to carry out more pre-market engagement

Maximise opportunities by publishing the Supply Hertfordshire URL on outgoing e-mails from Corporate Procurement and procuring officers.

## Internal Training & Development

### Summarised selection of comments from responders:

- Depends upon local companies workloads, business strategy and capacity to deliver
- Lack of understanding about the Intend E-tendering System
- Concern about all band 2 procurements being procured through the Intend E-tendering system by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017.
- A clearer definition of social value would be useful

Summary of Council response to comments:

The Council have tried to encourage local and small businesses within the strategy and hope that it opens up the door and encourages them to work with the Council.

Corporate Procurement will be working with all departments to ensure that training is delivered ready for a smooth roll out for all band 2 procurements to be carried out through the E-tendering system by March 2017.

Social value is not covered in depth in the strategy but further information can be found on the Council's intranet.

Actions:

Encourage Officers to carry out more pre-market engagement to understand what suppliers are able to offer prior to starting procurement.

Corporate Procurement will provide training across the Council for staff to ensure that all procuring officers are aware of the Intend system and are able to use it for band 2 procurements by March 2017.

Any problems that suppliers have had with Intend will be identified and training will be offered along with directions to the Intend user guides.