

Supplier Charter

The purpose of this Supplier Charter is to give you information about the standards of service you can expect when you deal with Sunderland City Council. The Council is a major purchaser within the local economy and seeks to act as a role model of good purchasing practice

We, 'Sunderland City Council', recognise that suppliers play a critical role in the delivery of public services, and we want to work with suppliers in a way that promotes a clear understanding of the Council's needs. We are therefore interested in your opinions, will listen to them and, where appropriate, act upon your suggestions/comments about the way we carry out our business.

Sunderland City Council's commitment to suppliers is to:

- Operate a fair tender process to ensure that all rules and policies are fairly applied, to help minimise the cost to suppliers and to allow equal access to relevant information throughout the tender process.
- Carry out procurement activity to the highest ethical standards; adhere to all relevant legislation and encourage a wide and diverse range of suppliers to compete for Council business.
- Provide free and easy access to Sunderland's electronic procurement system, 'OPEN' (www.open-uk.org), which gives suppliers and organisations the opportunity to bid for Council contracts.
- Where legally permissible and practicable, the Council will balance opportunities with value for money by considering the division of larger contracts into smaller lots, to give SMEs and the Voluntary Sector an equal chance to tender for them.
- Lead by example and demonstrate good practice in our tax conduct right across our activities to promote responsible tax conduct as part of the Council's commitment to the Fair Tax Foundation's Councils for Fair Tax Declaration.

- As a real Living Wage Employer, the Council has committed to:
 - Pay the UK real Living Wage to all directly employed staff.
 - Ensure contracted workers are paid the UK real Living Wage when delivering Council services.
 - Increase the wages of these employees and contracted workers to the real Living Wage, if appropriate, within six months of any rise in the calculated Living Wage rates.
- Understanding and mitigating risks of slavery and human trafficking in its corporate activities and supply chains. An annual statement is published which sets out the Council's commitment and associated actions to understand all potential risks and steps it has taken to aim to ensure that there is no slavery or human trafficking in its business and supply chains. To ensure our procurement practices do not directly or indirectly support slavery, the Council has signed up to the Co-operative Party Charter Against Modern Slavery.
- Seek to secure social value for all procurements over £10k to maximise community benefits.
- Work towards carbon neutrality – the Council has declared a climate emergency, setting a target for all Council operations to be carbon neutral by 2030 and to be carbon neutral as a city by 2040. Our charter sets an ambition for the supply chain to help us work towards these goals. We want to reduce waste, emissions, and the use of natural resources. We support technology and innovative methods to help us achieve this aim.
- Strive to conduct a supplier brief or supplier awareness day during a high risk/high value tender process, which will help suppliers submit compliant tenders and therefore will increase opportunities for suppliers to do business with the Council.
- Strive to minimise complaints and respond to enquiries in a courteous and timely manner.
- Publish guidance on tender documentation in appropriate locations; provide clear specifications; where possible avoid unnecessary onerous contract terms and only ask for information which is required for legal, monitoring or evaluation purposes.
- Offer constructive feedback in writing to suppliers after award of contracts to assist with future Sunderland City Council tenders.
- Where invoices are not in dispute, strive to meet contractual payment terms.

- Ensure all contracts awarded are published via a Contract Register, appropriate contract award notices will be published on the Find a tender service.
- **Cabinet Office Public Procurement Review Service** allows government suppliers and potential government suppliers to raise concerns anonymously about potentially poor public sector procurement practice. The service was launched in February 2011 as part of a range of measures to build the commercial capability of contracting authorities through their adoption of good procurement policy and practice and to ensure that public procurements do not impose unnecessary barriers to small businesses when bidding for public contracts. The Council will endeavor to respond and/or act upon any recommendations resulting in an investigation against Sunderland City Council.

Sunderland City Council wants to work effectively with its suppliers and in return for the Council's Suppliers' Charter above looks to its suppliers to commit to the following:

- Contribute to the Council's Corporate Objectives to achieve positive social, economic and environmental impacts on the community and the wider environment in Sunderland.
- Seek to deliver value for money and continuous improvement throughout the life of the contract.
- Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation and recognise the Council's duties under EU and UK law in respect of public procurement activity.
- Operate with competency and efficiency and to the highest standards of professionalism and integrity, with particular regard to their employees and suppliers / sub-contractors, but also in their dealings with the Council's customers and staff.
- Work collaboratively with the Council, suggesting innovative ways to improve quality and reduce cost and/or wastage.
- Provide feedback on tender processes and perceived barriers to business.
- Inform the Council as early as possible when issues and problems arise, so that we can work together to find a mutually satisfactory solution.
- Support the use of technology, which enables suppliers to benefit from participation in the Council's e-sourcing processes.
- Pay the right amount of corporation tax at the right time and in the right place.

- Consider becoming accredited by the Fair Tax Foundation which could be a mark of pride for your business and employees, as well as a way to boost customer confidence and demonstrate your commitment to corporate social responsibility.
- Consider becoming a Real Living Wage accredited employer and/or paying the UK real Living Wage.
- Consider Social Value opportunities to maximise the community benefits for the city.
- Understand all potential risks and steps to ensure that there is no slavery or human trafficking in your business and respective supply chains.
- Demonstrate that suppliers and subcontractors are paid in accordance with agreed terms and make every attempt to reflect fair and equal payment terms onto subcontractors by promoting payment in accordance with Council guidelines.
- Work towards carbon neutrality – consider how as a supplier you can work with the Council and your supply chain to help us to reduce waste, emissions, and the use of natural resources, to support the Council's goal to become carbon neutral by 2030 and for the city as a whole to achieve this target by 2040.
- Conduct communications with the Council in a courteous and timely manner and ensure any request to release information (e.g. Freedom of Information Act 2000) is made within the permitted timescales.

This Charter is a statement of intent of the Council's commitment to our suppliers and conversely of the expectations we have of our current and potential suppliers, it does not hold any legal status.