



# MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL

## Local Procurement Strategy 2021

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# 1. Introduction

The local procurement strategy's purpose is to engage better with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) third sector and supported business to achieve a mixed economy of suppliers to support and develop our local market and to maximise opportunities for these suppliers to participate in local government procurement exercises.

As the landscape changes rapidly due to the COVID-19 pandemic it has never been more important to ensure our Local businesses are supported and that the Council continues to provide value for money in goods, works and services contracts.

Midlothian Council has a duty to promote the economic growth of Midlothian and the current Procurement Strategy 2018 – 2023 aims to maximise local spend ensuring growth and job creation.

This Strategy aims to significantly enhance support to SMEs, third sector and supported business by:

- Increasing opportunities for SMEs, third sector and supported business to gain Council business, mechanisms shall include SME targeted supplier events, awareness roadshows, meet the buyer events, supplier surgeries, training opportunities delivered in conjunction with Economic Development, Business Gateway and the Supplier Development Programme (SDP).
- Providing SMEs, third sector and supported business with greater access to procurement opportunities, all contract opportunities, where applicable, are advertised on Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) website, contracts will be split into smaller "Lots" to encourage local competition, issuing low value quick quote opportunities to a minimum of 5 suppliers **Where possible we will invite offers from at least 3 local suppliers.** Economic Development will reach out to relevant businesses via their Business Gateway advisers and external partners and encourage local suppliers to register with PCS as a continuous activity.
- Removing or minimising barriers to procurement opportunities by simplifying and standardising the procurement processes.
- Ensuring suppliers are paid within 30 days on receipt of invoice.

This strategy will be implemented progressively as we move towards new ways of working due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be reviewed in 12 months to assess its effectiveness and adjusted as required.

## 2. Key Objectives

### 2.1. Objectives

- Demonstrate leadership and corporate social responsibility by procuring sustainably and ethically and influencing suppliers, contractors, service providers and our collaborative partners to do the same.
- SMEs, third sector (supported businesses & social enterprise) and the local business community will be encouraged and supported in their efforts to engage commercially with the Council.

- We will work with these bodies to help them increase capacity and understanding of the procurement process and subsequent procurement systems.
- Resources available includes:
  - Scottish Government's Procurement Journey.
  - The supplier development programme talking tenders service.
  - Business Gateway expert help Procurement consultancy.
- The Council will use its contract and supplier relationship management processes to improve, social, economic, environmental and sustainable arrangements within current and future contract opportunities.
- The Council will seek to build Community Benefit Clauses into a broader range of contracts and will work with suppliers to explore how the procurement system helps us meet the wider objectives of the Single Midlothian Plan.
- The Council will use its spend to actively encourage and support a growing, diverse and resilient local business base, and to support our Carbon Neutral by 2030 ambitions.
- The Council will consider any negative externalities of procurement, for example the impact on the environment.
- The Council has a key role in stimulating complex markets in pursuit of mixed provision of services and in ensuring equality of opportunity to do business exists.
- Promote engagement with SMEs through regular forums, e.g. Meet the Buyer events, Supplier Surveys, etc.
- Midlothian Council will support our business base – including a wide range of business models – to enhance their capacity to bid for public sector contracts.
- Midlothian Council will encourage local businesses to explore their supply chain opportunities to support the local and regional economy.

### 3. Implementation

#### **3.1. Creating opportunities for local suppliers to do business with the Council**

All Lead Officers in procuring/commissioning services across the Council need to be aware of SMEs local to Midlothian and the impact of their actions when developing their procurement strategy.

In order to improve awareness of the Local Procurement strategy a forum to include Lead Officers, the Community Benefit group, Economic Development & Procurement will meet on a regular basis, this will ensure that consideration pre tender is given to factors including sustainability, local supply base & community benefit activities. This forum will also identify forthcoming opportunities with sufficient lead time to enable a local supplier search.

As part of the procurement strategy Lead Officers must identify any local SMEs that may be able to participate during the procurement planning stage.

The procurement strategy should identify the suitability of the procurement project for SMEs and the opportunities it presents for them. This includes SMEs as direct suppliers to the Council or as part of the supply chain providing goods, works and services to the Council.

It is important that the onus will be on lead officers to be involved with Economic Development and Procurement from the start of the procurement process and to remain involved throughout the entire process.

All tenders currently include quality evaluation criteria which includes community benefits and fair working practice.

### 3.2. Improved communication and advice to business

All procurement opportunities over £5,000 are usually published on the Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) website, which automatically provides users with free notifications of tender opportunities and allows for free self-registration.

The Council will improve its procurement website to include a specific section aimed at SMEs and give access to all procurement information and tendering opportunities. The Economic Development team will include a procurement page on the Business Support section of the Council website which will be mirrored on the 'Locate in Midlothian' website.

We will develop further guidance for suppliers around achieving community benefits, and will include this on our website and on the Locate in Midlothian website.

The procurement team in conjunction with Economic Development will host Meet the Buyer events, regular targeted supplier events and provide a drop in surgery throughout the rolling 12 months. External partners (e.g. Scotland Excel) will also be invited to attend these events to promote use of their frameworks. The team will continue to have an 'open door' policy for suppliers to contact and discuss their requirements. The Procurement team will broadly follow the timetable below with the support from Economic Development and the Supplier Development Program (SDP) where appropriate.

#### Consultation and Action Plan

| Meeting / Action  | Venue / Action | Date     | Lead Contact  |
|---|----------------|----------|---|
| Meet the Buyer Event Edinburgh & Lothian's – all Suppliers.                   | Online         | Mar 2021 | Economic Development with support from Procurement.   |
| Meet the Buyer Event – Targeted (Trades, Construction, Transport, Corporate). |                | Jun 2021 | Economic Development with support from Procurement.   |
| Meet the Buyer Event – Targeted (Third Sector, Supported Businesses).         |                | May 2021 | Economic Development with support from Procurement.   |
| Supplier drop in surgeries (once a quarter).                                  |                |          | ED/BG expert help framework/SDP surgeries.  |
| Supplier Survey (issue every 6 months).                                       |                |          | Joint exercise.   |
| Training Courses for Suppliers (e.g. Australian model of "love me tender").   |                |          | SDP deliver webinar training on a national basis. ED will request industry specific on regular basis & promote. |

The number and frequency of Meet the Buyer events will be monitored during the year to avoid duplication and the risk of potential tenderers developing "event fatigue".

### 3.3. Streamlined and Standardised approach to procurement

Midlothian Council recognises the need, where practical, to simplify and standardise processes to ensure consistency in order to provide a fair and open approach to tendering and to create opportunities for SMEs as well as ensuring Best Value for money. The procurement team will:

- Keep the tender process as simple as possible, but consistent with achieving best value for money, to help minimise costs to suppliers.
- Use standardised documentation proportionate to the procurement project.
- Consult with the business community to identify and reduce barriers to business.
- Pre-tender/Supplier events to be conducted where applicable.
- All procurements opportunities advertised on PCS. Suppliers must be registered.

## 4. Further Information and Key Contacts

The Procurement Team can provide advice and guidance on a wide range of procurement related services. Enquiries should be emailed to [procurement@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:procurement@midlothian.gov.uk)

Procurement will work closely with the Economic Development Team who are committed to supporting the local business community.

The main focus will be stimulating economic growth in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and supporting new and existing local business to be sustainable in these uncertain times. As any crisis does, it throws up opportunity for positive change.

The Economic Development Team offer a comprehensive, tailored package of support including:

- Business advice and support via Business Gateway service.
- Inward Investment.
- Premises identification.
- Business Regulatory Support Service.
- Procurement support.
- Locate in Midlothian.

Throughout the rolling 12 months the Council will organise training and events designed to address the main challenges and exploit the opportunities facing the local business community.

Enquiries should be emailed to [econ-dev@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:econ-dev@midlothian.gov.uk)

## 5. Economic Development / Business Gateway

The Economic Development and Business Gateway team have access to most of the local business base therefore they will provide a critical role in ensuring that the communications for procurement reach our local audience. This will be undertaken by direct mail and digital promotion through the 'Locate in Midlothian' website and through associated social channels by way of a campaign to attract local businesses to register with Midlothian Council. Once registered, businesses will receive support to access Scotland's Procurement Frameworks.

## 6. Supplier Development Programme

The Supplier Development Programme provides webinars to introduce businesses to procurement opportunities and continuous support via multiple channels. The emphasis on local procurement has led to an increase in the channels and support provided by the SDP programme. Support now includes:

- Procurement Surgeries.
- Procurement Q & A sessions.
- Bespoke Talking Tenders webinars.
- Bespoke Tender Training webinars.
- Twitter Takeovers.