



## **Selling to the Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service**

### **A Guide to Suppliers**

#### **Section 1: Introduction**

Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service (CFRS) is issuing this guidance to help businesses interested in supplying us for the first time or expanding existing business with us. We buy a wide range of goods and services each year and are keen to ensure value for money and that we work in effective partnerships with our suppliers.

This guide:

- Gives a brief description of the procurement organisation within CFRS;
- Explains the role of the Procurement Department;
- Lists some of the range of goods and services we purchase;
- Outlines the typical procurement cycle;
- Advises you on what you can expect from us and what we shall expect from you in return;
- Explains who to contact for further information;
- Sets out a checklist of good practice;
- Gives information on our sustainable procurement, equality and diversity, as well as our strategy on the employment of consultants.

#### **Section 2: Our Organisation**

CFRS has 27 fire stations and a headquarters in Winsford. We respond to emergency incidents - known as Emergency Response (ER) across the four unitary council areas of:

Halton, Warrington, Cheshire East, and Cheshire West and Chester.

We also provide community safety advice, which helps us to reduce risks and to improve:-

- Community and public safety
- Business safety and safety at work

#### **What do we do?**

We respond to all emergency calls from the public for assistance. Not just fires, but to incidents where members of the community are trapped in vehicles following road traffic collisions,

trapped in machinery, or trapped in less life threatening circumstances as well as being called to chemical spillages and toxic emissions.

We proactively manage, enforce, and prosecute in areas such as community risk (domestic and commercial premises) and road safety.

We also deal with many domestic situations such as flooding, storm damage, people unable to gain access to premises and animals in distress.

### **How our procurement is organised?**

The Strategic Procurement Unit (SPU) based at Winsford Headquarters is responsible for the procurement and supply of goods and services for the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Headquarters, 27 stations and two Community Safety Centres throughout Cheshire.

The role of the SPU is to obtain best value for money. This means choosing the bid that offers the optimum combination of whole life costs and benefits to meet the customer's requirement. This is not necessarily the lowest initial price option and requires assessing the ongoing revenue/resource costs as well as the initial capital investment.

### **Responsible within the Procurement department:**

#### **Head of Procurement - Anita Gibbs**

- Identify, develop and implement corporate procurement systems and procedures
- Monitor compliance with Financial Regulations
- Provide Sole Supplier approval for single source procurements
- Deliver savings and efficiencies

#### **Procurement and Contracts Manager – Jacqui Williams**

- Provide professional procurement guidance and support
- Undertake stakeholder engagement
- Explore collaborative partnerships and procurement opportunities
- Facilitate the tender process, including advertisement in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU)

#### **Procurement and Contracts Officer - John McIntyre**

- Develop, Implementation and management of systems and procedures for the monitoring, control and assessment of all contracts
- Specify, Negotiate and manage specific Contracts
- Develop and update standard contracting documentation and systems, including quotation and tendering arrangements that are best practice and comply with financial regulations and UK/EU legislation

#### **Assistant Buyer - Carl Burdett**

- Review purchase orders and requisitions for compliance with procedures and the financial regulations and place with the supplier
- Assist in obtaining quotations and providing an analysis of bids received
- Assist in compiling product information and comparison of prices and quality
- Review open purchase orders and expedite delivery as necessary, ensuring that the end users are kept up to date with the delivery dates and order progress

### **Financial Limits**

It is Cheshire Fire Authority's policy to adhere to the following rules when obtaining quotes.

- £5,000 - £50,000 (3 formal written quotes)
- £50,000 - £181,302 (formal tender)
- Over £181,302 (advertise in the Official Journal of European Union (OJEU), this is the threshold for Public sector goods and services).

## Section 3: What do we purchase?

CFRS predominately purchases a wide range of products and services. These include:

- IT supplies & services
- Uniform
- PPE
- Equipment
- Vehicles & spares
- Cleaning
- Planned and reactive maintenance
- Travel services (including car hire, hotels, air and rail travel)
- Management consultancy
- Training and development
- Estate services
- Stationery and consumables
- Print
- Furniture and furnishings
- HR and Health Services

## Section 4: How do we select suppliers?

On some occasions, it is pertinent to select a supplier from an existing framework agreement, such as those provided by the Crown Commercial Service (<https://ccs-agreements.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/>). On these occasions, it is usual to undertake a mini-competition between the providers listed on the framework.

There may be some instances where the requirement is either very low value or is for a very specific commodity when we will short list suppliers based on reputation, supplier's catalogues, trade information or trade exhibitions.

For all other procurement exercises, our preferred route to market is via the Bluelight E-tendering system <https://bluelight.eu-supply.com/>. From this platform, we will advertise small and large opportunities to registered suppliers. Depending on the anticipated value of the requirement, we may invite a quotation, a tender or a Selection Questionnaire (SQ). A SQ is designed to assess a company's capacity to undertake the work advertised by obtaining financial and technical information from potential suppliers. If a company is successful at SQ stage, they will be invited to complete a full tender exercise.

Evaluation:

The object of the evaluation process is to identify the tender or quotation which provides the overall best value for money for the particular purchase. Our tender evaluation is strictly controlled and conducted objectively and impartially. Evaluation and subsequent discussions with suppliers will generally identify a winning tender. Occasionally evaluation will not separate tenders and in these circumstances shortlisted bidders may be asked to provide samples or demonstrate their products or services. It may also be necessary for a visit to be arranged to the shortlisted suppliers' premises. We will also follow up any references that may have been requested.

Award:

Once a decision has been reached following evaluation of written quotations or tenders, the successful and unsuccessful supplier(s) will be informed in writing without delay. Within

the boundaries of commercial confidentiality we will provide, on request, feedback to successful and unsuccessful tenderers.

#### Terms and Conditions:

CFRS conducts business on our own terms and conditions of contract. There are several sets of terms in use, covering various categories of goods and services. The relevant set of terms is always included in the Invitation to Tender package. In more complex tenders bespoke terms and conditions will be applied.

#### Post contract performance measurement:

We monitor ongoing performance of our suppliers against agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Specific measures will vary from contract to contract, but the broad themes for all suppliers to perform against are:

- Quality and environmental
- Commercial
- Delivery
- Partnership

### **Section 5: Our Payment Policies are as follows:**

We are committed to pay suppliers in accordance with the terms of their contract with us. We will pay 30 days from receipt of a valid invoice.

In order to meet our contractual obligation, it is important that your invoice provides the details required for us to match it to the original order/contract.

In particular, it is essential that you quote:

- Costs
- Delivery charges
- VAT
- A current valid Purchase Order (PO) Number

If some of this information is missing, it will delay our payment to you.

### **Section 6: Who should I approach?**

We strongly recommend that all potential suppliers to Cheshire Fire and Rescue Services register on the Bluelight E-tendering system <https://bluelight.eu-supply.com/>

### **Section 7: Sustainable procurement**

CFRS is committed to promoting the conservation and improvement of the environment.

Our policy on Sustainable Procurement is:

- To comply with environmental legislation and regulatory requirements;
- To promote environmental awareness amongst suppliers and contractors;
- To buy less environmentally damaging products and services;
- To consider environmental factors when making procurement decisions; and

- To develop awareness of environmental issues within the Department.

The Department will:

- Research and follow guidance relating to the environment;
- Include environmental conditions or criteria in specification and tender documents where relevant;
- Evaluate specifications and tenders with appropriate weight given to environmental points; and
- Encourage suppliers and contractors to support our initiative by taking their own action.

Where environmental conditions are specified, evaluation will normally take into account:

- Regulatory compliance;
- Environmental effects and performance measures;
- Existing environmental management procedures; and
- Commitment to management and process improvement.

## **Section 8: Equality and Diversity**

CFRS values everybody's contribution and believes that CFRS' success and its future depends on the quality of service that we provide and on gaining the trust of the community we serve. We value the support from our suppliers of goods and services, and see their commitment to this objective playing an important part in helping us to achieve our goal. If everyone is to feel valued and we are to help individuals give their best, our goal must be to create and sustain a working environment that is fair to all and free from discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying.

Through commitment, action and review, we want to ensure that we have the opportunity to benefit from employment, training and development appropriate to our abilities and regardless of our sex, , race, religion or belief, , disability, age, marriage or civil partnership, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity or gender reassignment. In our approach to contracting with suppliers for the provision of goods and services we look to build business relationships with those suppliers who support and apply similar principles within their own businesses. We expect to see suppliers actively promoting the principles of equality and diversity in their businesses evidenced through their policies and day to day working practices.

A CFRS which is diverse and representative of the local community, and where people value each other, will help us to improve the service we provide to all those who come into contact with us.

The benefits of embedding Equality and Diversity in the supply chain:

- Improved products and services.

CFRS recognises that our own staff perform better when they can be themselves. Therefore, by embracing Equality and Diversity, CFRS believes that suppliers can deliver more creative, cost-effective and competitive products and services.

- Reputation

CFRS has worked hard to establish a reputation for embracing Equality and Diversity and we recognise that failure to consider Equality and Diversity in the Procurement process will result in reputational damage, particularly if a supplier is coming into contact with our staff or delivery services on our behalf.

- Better Services

Outsourcing services to Equality and Diversity friendly suppliers ensures we meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (e.g. foster good relations on the grounds of sexual orientation etc).

- Being a role model

Working with our suppliers provides CFRS with a great opportunity to highlight the varied work that we are undertaking to advance Equality and Diversity.

CFRS underpins and ensures these benefits are realised by:

- Making Equality and Diversity part of our tendering process and then including conditions in all of our contracts.
- Support our suppliers (work in partnership).
- Assist and help suppliers tender for business.
- Lead by example.
- Hold suppliers to account.

In order to determine whether our supplier's support our commitment to equality and diversity, CFRS asks them to provide a copy of their equality and diversity, or similar, policy during the procurement process. Whether the supplier has such a policy, and whether it explicitly bars discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, disability, religion, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity will be taken into account when deciding whether to award a contract to a supplier.

CFRS will also consider what equality and diversity training is offered by suppliers to their staff and whether this is inclusive of protected characteristics, such as gender, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, disability, religion, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity. This will also be taken into account when deciding whether to award a contract to a supplier. CFRS is able to provide equality and diversity training to contractors where appropriate and copies of our equality and diversity related policies are also available on request.



## Section 9: Consultants

CFRS approves a variety of consultancy projects each year. With such expenditure the Service is keen to ensure that it receives full value for money, and that consultants and CFRS staff work together effectively.

This section therefore outlines the key elements of the Services policy towards the use of consultants and is a checklist of good practice. This section was produced in consultation with the Office of Government Commerce, Institute of Management Consultants and the Management Consultancies Association.

### Selection Process

The selection process leading to the appointment of consultants involves the same three main stages as other purchases, namely: pre-tender, invitation, evaluation/award. The initial decision to employ consultants will follow the approval of a carefully thought-out project brief. Following this decision we will follow the selection procedure outlined in Section 4 to this

leaflet. In addition, we expect that consultants will only accept those projects where they are suitably qualified and able to carry them out.

### **Project Delivery**

Once appointment has been confirmed the project stage will commence and be followed by a post implementation review.

During the project stage we will:

- Appoint a senior member of staff with knowledge of the area concerned as project manager for the duration of the project, unless overriding reasons make this undesirable or impossible;
- Have early discussions to promote understanding of the requirement, and brief consultants concerning expected problems and concerns;
- Introduce consultants to the organisation and provide access to the people they need to see;
- Where appropriate, provide access to suitable accommodation facilities;
- Ensure access to relevant systems, documentation and information;
- Set up steering arrangements when needed;
- Review progress at agreed stages by comparing quality of inputs and tasks performed against agreed standards; and
- Confirm that consultants have been discharged of responsibility before final payment.

We will expect:

That unless specific permission to the contrary is agreed, all information obtained during a project will be treated as confidential; At all times, a high professional standard of work, and where specified, the provision of the same consultant(s) through all stages of the project;

- Effective communication with the project manager;
- Consultants to be responsive and objective at all times;
- Adoption of CFRS personnel policies, office practices and Health and Safety Regulations;
- Practical and cost effective recommendations resulting from interim, emerging and final reports, supported, if required, by presentation;
- Subject to agreement, an appropriate action plan to implement the results to include timing, sequencing, and anticipated cost of implementation; and
- In the event of Terms of Reference not being fully discharged, we would expect remedial work to be carried out at no extra cost to the Department.