



## **How to do Business with Plymouth Community Homes**

‘A guide for local small and medium enterprises including the voluntary and community sector organisations.’

## **Foreword**

There is a national housing shortage. Plymouth Community Homes is the largest provider of social housing within the City of Plymouth and is expanding its reach to provide affordable housing solutions within the region. In order to do this the organisation needs to ensure that it has the most effective and efficient supply chains.

Our business is primarily seated within the construction and property maintenance arena, although other services are needed to support us. This guide has been produced to assist small and medium sized enterprises, as well as voluntary and community organisations to have the best possible chance of effectively competing to supply those goods and services.

Plymouth Community Homes has an aim to stimulate the local economy and where regulation and legislation permit, we will give preference to locally based organisations when selecting our suppliers.

Plymouth Community Homes

Procurement Department

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## 1. Introduction

Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) is a well-established organisation within the City of Plymouth with a reputation for trading fairly and ethically with its suppliers, as such the organisation is seen as a desirable customer for many suppliers resulting in significant competition to supply goods, services and works.

This guide is produced to assist Small and Medium Enterprises and the Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations (SME's/ VCO's) to understand how PCH makes its supply decisions and how they can improve the opportunity to be part of the PCH supply chain.

We recognise the value that SME's and VCO's bring to the local economy and local community, and that they can play an important role in helping PCH to deliver its objectives.

**Responsiveness** - shorter management chains and approval routes allow quicker response to changing requirements.

**Flexibility** - small businesses are normally more willing to tailor a product or service to meet the customer needs than a larger firm that sells an established offering.

**Competition** - Bringing greater competition to the market place - this helps drive costs down.

**Lower Cost** - administrative overheads and management costs are typically lower for smaller organisations which may result in lower prices.

**Quality of Service** - small businesses can often offer more personal levels of service.

**Specialism** - many small businesses survive by offering specialist products or services that larger suppliers find unattractive, for example because of limited demand.

PCH Recognises that there are many barriers facing SME's / VCO's when endeavouring to win business and we will, in circumstances where regulation and legislation permit, seek to appoint locally based SME's and VCO's to meet our needs.

## 2. The Law

PCH is a regulated organisation and is bound by many regulatory requirements. Defined as a Public Contracting Authority it is bound by the laws and regulations that govern public procurement.

Following the UK's withdrawal from the EU the government enacted new U.K Laws to govern public procurement in October 2023. PCH will now need to conduct its tendering processes in accordance with this new legislation from October 2024.

This means that where we have a supply requirement that exceeds the prescribed value thresholds, we must undertake a formal regulated tender process and that we MUST award the contract based upon “The Most Advantageous Tender”.

This enables us to take local sustainability and community benefit into account when awarding contracts under regulated processes.

PCH also has its own internal governance processes designed to ensure transparency and fairness in the way it conducts its business, and these processes must be followed for all supply requirements that sit below the value threshold for a regulated process.

### 3. Procurement Thresholds

Regulated thresholds are published bi-annually by central government and are currently;

£214,904 (inc VAT) for goods and services and;  
£5,372,609 (inc VAT) for works.

PCH has set value thresholds which will dictate the method to be used to award contracts and purchase orders for the goods, services and works it needs.

Typically the greater the value or perceived risk within a potential contract the more rigorous a process will be followed.

Lower value procurements will be subject to obtaining written quotations, and in such circumstances organisations will be invited to provide a quotation. PCH will consider cost, quality and availability (timeliness) in selecting which quotation provides the most advantageous solution before issuing a purchase order.

Where requirements have a value of £70,000 or more a tender process will be undertaken through PCH’s electronic tendering portal “MerCell”.

### 4. Registration for Tenders.

In order to participate in any tender process it will be necessary to register your organisation on PCH’s tender portal “MerCell”.

[Plymouth Community Homes \(eu-supply.com\)](https://eu-supply.com)

Registering should enable you to receive notification of any tender opportunity we have published.

### 5. Tender Process

For the procurement of goods, works and services that fall exceed the tender value threshold (£70,000) a formal tender process will be adopted.

- PCH will publish a tender notice on the “MerCell” e-tendering portal and will make tendering documentation available to potential suppliers through the portal.
- Documents will typically consist of;
  - Instructions to tender (ITT)
  - Specification
  - Technical Questionnaire
  - Pricing document
  - Some Declaration Documentation.
  - Contract Terms
  
- The instructions to Tender (ITT) sets out what the supplier needs to do and the dates by which they need to complete and submit their tender. This is an important document and by following the instructions set out you will increase your chances of being successful.
  
- The specification will set out our requirements including all safety and quality aspects as well as expected time of delivery.
  
- The technical questionnaire is a key element in assessing the tender submissions. Your response to these will be evaluated by an assessment panel and scored according to how you demonstrate your ability to meet our needs. This is a very important part of the process, and will be a significant factor in determining who we award a contract to.  
You should therefore ensure that you provide an accurate response to each question and identify how your response demonstrates your ability to meet our requirements.
  
- The pricing document is also a key element in assessing the tender and in conjunction with the technical assessment will allow PCH to make a fair and transparent contract award decision. Pricing documents often require the supplier to identify the price of individual elements of the requirement, as well as the total price tendered. In order to increase your opportunity to be successful, you should provide all the details requested.
  
- PCH is a Public Organisation and is duty bound to, as far as possible, ensure that it is trading with reputable, ethical businesses. To assist us in making that judgement we do include some documents that require suppliers to declare their compliance with ethical business processes and therefore we do include some of these documents within our tender processes.
  
- The contract terms under which PCH expects to award the contract. This could be PCH standard terms, or third party drafted terms that we can amend to suite both parties needs (such as the Joint Contracts Tribunal(JCT)).

- Participating suppliers should ensure that all completed documentation is submitted through the tender portal before the deadline time and date set out in the ITT document.

## 6. Evaluation and Award Process

Upon receipt of your tender submission, we will evaluate your responses to the technical questionnaire and produce a score for this element of the process. The score you achieve will be used to divide your total price submission and produce a cost/unit of quality value. The lowest cost/unit will, subject to some diligence checks, be declared the winner and a contract awarded.

## 7. Assistance.

PCH is aware that some tendering organisations have resources dedicated to crafting and submitting tender responses, and therefore enhance their opportunity to win contracts. We know that most local SME's / VCO's do not have this kind of resource. In order to assist local suppliers PCH will, where our capacity allows provide assistance and guidance to local suppliers in completing their tender responses, in order to give the supplier an equal opportunity to win such contracts.

Any PCH resource provided to assist suppliers will not have any role to play in managing the tender process for PCH and segregation of duty will be maintained, so that no conflict of interest will exist.

## 8. Feedback

Whatever the outcome of any tender process undertaken by PCH, if you have provided a tender submission, we will undertake to provide feedback on the process and outcome should you request it.

## 9. Further Information

This guide to doing business with PCH does not guarantee that you will be successful in winning business with PCH. The regulatory framework we work within prevents PCH any form of discrimination for local businesses or any other business or organisation. However we would like to assure local SME's and VCO's that we will

endeavour to ensure a level playing field and that you will have an equal opportunity to compete for business.

If you would like to know more about doing business with Plymouth Community Homes, you can contact us at:

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