

Removing the mystery from the tendering process

Produced by Hertfordshire Business Service,
the purchasing arm of Hertfordshire County Council



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Throughout the text of this document Hertfordshire County Council is shown as The Council.

Removing the Mystery from the Tendering Process

1. INTRODUCTION

The Tendering process for any local authority is perceived to be a complex, time consuming and costly process and many suppliers especially Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) can find it difficult.

We want our contracts to be accessible and the process to be transparent and as easy as we can make it. We do, however, have rules to follow and must act within the law. We are spending public money and have to be seen to obtain value for money.

We have produced this guide to help you. Read it in conjunction with our other document "Selling to Hertfordshire County Council".

There are some links quoted in the text but please see the section "Useful Contacts and Information" for more help.

2. SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

2.1 Will The Council be interested in my product?

Search our list of awarded contracts on the HCC Contract Register. It contains all Council contracts with a value of £10,000 and above.

2.2 How to find available Tenders

You can see contracts over £10,000 that are being tendered on HCC Tender Opportunities. Most of our tenders are advertised in this way.

If you register for the e-mail alert service then you will receive an e-mail every time a tender of the type you have registered for appears on Tender Opportunities

2.3 Getting on the Tender List

Contracts over £10,000 are advertised on HCC Tender Opportunities. If you are interested in participating in a particular contract then select the appropriate Tender Opportunity and follow the instructions. You can download instructions and tender documentation, and complete it electronically. At present you will need to return the required documents in hard copy format.

You can also register to receive e-mail alerts, which will notify you when tenders in the categories you have selected, are advertised on Tender Opportunities.

2.4 Work not shown on Tender Opportunities

It may be that the type of work or service you offer is not apparent on HCC Tender Opportunities.

If you are a contractor wishing to be considered for Property Services related works, please contact Property.Contract@hertsc.gov.uk

If you have a general enquiry that cannot be fulfilled by the methods above then send an e-mail to evelyn.poulton@hertsc.gov.uk with the detail of your enquiry and a bit about your company. We will then be able to pass your application on to the most appropriate buyer within Hertfordshire Business Services or other department within the County Council.

2.5 Contract Renewals

If you have been unsuccessful in a tender bid you will not automatically be considered when the contract comes up for renewal; you will have to reapply. Keep a look out on Tender Opportunities and register for the e-mail alert service.

2.6 Does The Council look for the cheapest prices?

We do not look for the lowest price, but for the most economically advantageous Tender. This phrase, often used in Tender documents means that factors taken into account include quality, cost over the life of the equipment / project, the cost of consumables and any maintenance, to obtain best value for money.

We also take into account the ongoing cost of doing business with suppliers and will seek to use electronic ordering and payments methods wherever possible.

2.7 Criteria needed to be a supplier to The Council

In order to be considered by The Council a supplier needs to fulfil the following criteria:

- The contractor must be reputable
- All goods and materials used or supplied must be to European Standards, or if they do not yet exist, British Standards or equivalent
- The contractor must comply with all statutory and other requirements in law throughout the life of the contract (including Race Relations, Equal Opportunities, Employment, and Health and Safety) and guidance will be provided on what is required.
- The contractor shall indemnify the Council for a minimum sum of £5,000,000 for Employers Liability, Public Liability, and Professional Liability where appropriate. There may be variations depending on the type of contract which will be detailed in the Terms and Conditions. If you are unclear about insurance then discuss with the Contracting Officer.
- Where applicable contractors will be required to work with the Contracting Officer to ensure that The Council's policies are adhered to.

Should you have any queries or not feel you can meet some of the criteria then please talk to us.

2.8 Are small companies considered?

The Council currently deals with many small companies in particular for the provision of services. As long as your small company meets the requirements within the Tender documents, you will be considered.

2.9 Who are The Council's customers?

We have a wide range of customers which include schools, colleges, and internal departments within The Council such as Environment, Fire and Rescue, social services (Children, Schools and Families (CSF) and Adult Care Services (ACS).

We also have a number of external non-profit making customers

2.10 What are The Council's payment terms?

Standard payment terms are 30 days from the date the payment is due, on receipt of a correct invoice.

2.11 How can we sell our products?

Hertfordshire Business Services, incorporating Hertfordshire Purchasing and Hertfordshire Supplies, is the purchasing arm of the Council, including purchasing for schools.

Contact supplies@hertsc.gov.uk

2.12 How do I find OJEU Notices?

You can subscribe to the Tenders Alert Service run by the Euro Info Centre at Business Link, or a publication such as Contrax Weekly.

2.13 What is the Central Buying Consortium?

The Central Buying Consortium (CBC) is the largest local authority purchasing consortium in the UK. It has seventeen local authority members, having grown from just six members when it was formed in 1991, and now represents most of the major authorities from the midlands to the south-east, outside London.

This means that member authorities can maximise their buying power by giving suppliers a wider market.

There are product groups including Food, IT, Energy and Building Materials. A lead authority is nominated to manage a particular contract on behalf of any members who wish to participate

2.14 How can I be a supplier to the CBC?

The Central Buying Consortium (CBC) website lists the chairs for each product group. <http://www.cbconline.org.uk/index.htm> Once in the CBC website, there is a link to the CBC Contract register where you will see all CBC Contracts and will be able to contact the Lead Buyer.

3. HOW COMPLEX IS THE TENDERING PROCESS?

3.1 Advertisement

When a contract is due for renewal, if it is above the European Thresholds then an advertisement is placed within the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU), Contrax Weekly, and also on HCC Tender Opportunities. For contracts that are either below these thresholds or legally do not require us to follow this process, we may advertise them on HCC Tender Opportunities and occasionally in appropriate press and journals. <http://www.hertsdirect.org/contractsandtenders>

3.2 Sending out Tender documents

Our preferred method is for you to access HCC Tender Opportunities and download any documents.

There are two different tendering processes that are advertised on Tender Opportunities. The documentation will vary depending on the type of contract being tendered. The two different types are as follows:

- Those requiring a Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ). We may have some pre-selection criteria and these will be contained in a PQQ. This is a two stage process where you need to successfully pass through the PQQ stage to be invited to tender. If you successfully pass through the PQQ stage then Tender documents will be sent to you often by e-mail, but sometimes in the post.
- Those open to all suppliers. In this case all the tender documents will be available on line.

Each Tender Opportunity has a Tender Explanation note which gives the timetable and guidance about the requirement, followed by appropriate documents (depending on the process above) for you to download.

We are working on the HCC Tender Opportunities site to facilitate a two or more stage process, but this is not available yet. At present the completed Tender can only be returned by post. We may however also ask you to send an electronic copy of the return schedules.

To understand more about the PQQ process see the section entitled "The Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ)".

3.3 The Tender documents

The Tender may comprise the following:

- Tender Explanation Note (on HCC Tender Opportunities) detailing the timetable and a brief description of the Tender and instructions. Or an introduction letter containing an overview of the contract.
- Instructions to Tenderers
- Guidance notes
- Standard Conditions of Contract
- Contract Specific Conditions
- Specification
- Return Schedules

- Form of Tender
- Non-collusive Tendering Certificate
- Health & Safety Code of Practice (where applicable)
- Insurance Requirements
- Quality Assurance
- Equal Opportunities pro-forma
- Health & Safety Declaration
- Tender label - please follow instructions carefully for the return of Tender, including ensuring that the envelope or box contains no marks identifying the sender.

3.4 Return and Opening of Tenders

There are strict Authority rules for the receipt and opening of Tenders, this is why you need to follow instructions carefully, so that you do not invalidate your bid.

3.5 Evaluation

The evaluation is carried out using the award criteria stated in the Tender documents. Following an initial evaluation it may be necessary to short-list and perhaps invite presentations from short-listed tenderers.

3.6 Notification of award

All tenderers will be notified whether or not they have been successful. Unsuccessful tenderers will be offered debriefing.

4. THE PRE-QUALIFICATION QUESTIONNAIRE (PQQ)

4.1 What is a PQQ?

A PQQ is a document used by The Council (the Council) and all public sector bodies, to assess an organisation as to whether or not it could be included on a tender list for any of the Council's tender opportunities.

4.2 What does the document contain?

The PQQ covers the following areas concerning your organisation:

- A Organisation Identity
- B Financial Information
- C Insurance
- D Ability, Technical & Resources
- E TUPE and Pensions (for service contracts)
- F Environmental Information
- G References
- H Quality Assurance
- I Health and Safety
- K Declaration

4.3 Does my organisation need to complete all the information contained within the document?

You need to complete all the areas that apply to your organisation. However, don't panic if you leave blanks in the document. If we need further information we will come back to you.

4.4 What do I get help with any queries concerning the completion and submission of the PQQ?

Page 1 of the document gives a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address along with details of submission date and where the document should be returned to. There are also guidance notes on page 3 of the document, which should help when completing it.

4.5 What happens next?

The PQQs are assessed by a panel of Council Officers, against pre-defined criteria.

Each area (e.g. 'Organisation Identity') is given a score against the criteria with weightings assigned.

4.6 What happens after PQQ assessment?

Following the PQQ assessment process a tender shortlist will be drawn up and your organisation informed whether or not it will be invited to submit a tender bid.

4.7 What happens if my organisation is unsuccessful?

The Council will offer feedback to your organisation, which will highlight those areas where you may not have scored so highly and where you may be able to improve for future opportunities.

4.8 Will my organisation be considered for other requirements if the initial application was unsuccessful?

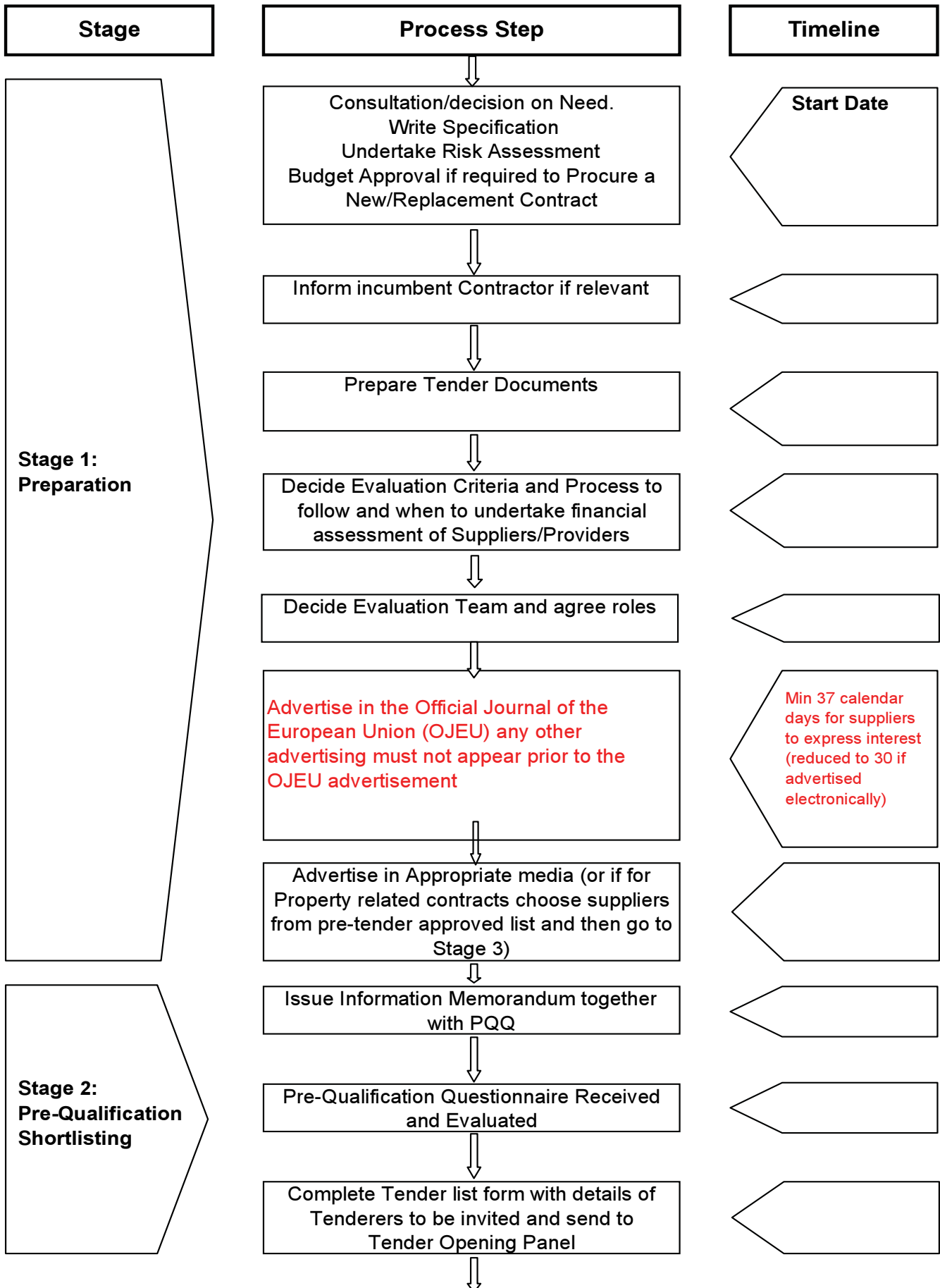
Each tender process is a separate exercise and for each one you would be required to express your interest for that requirement.

4.9 Helpful Hints When Completing the Documents:

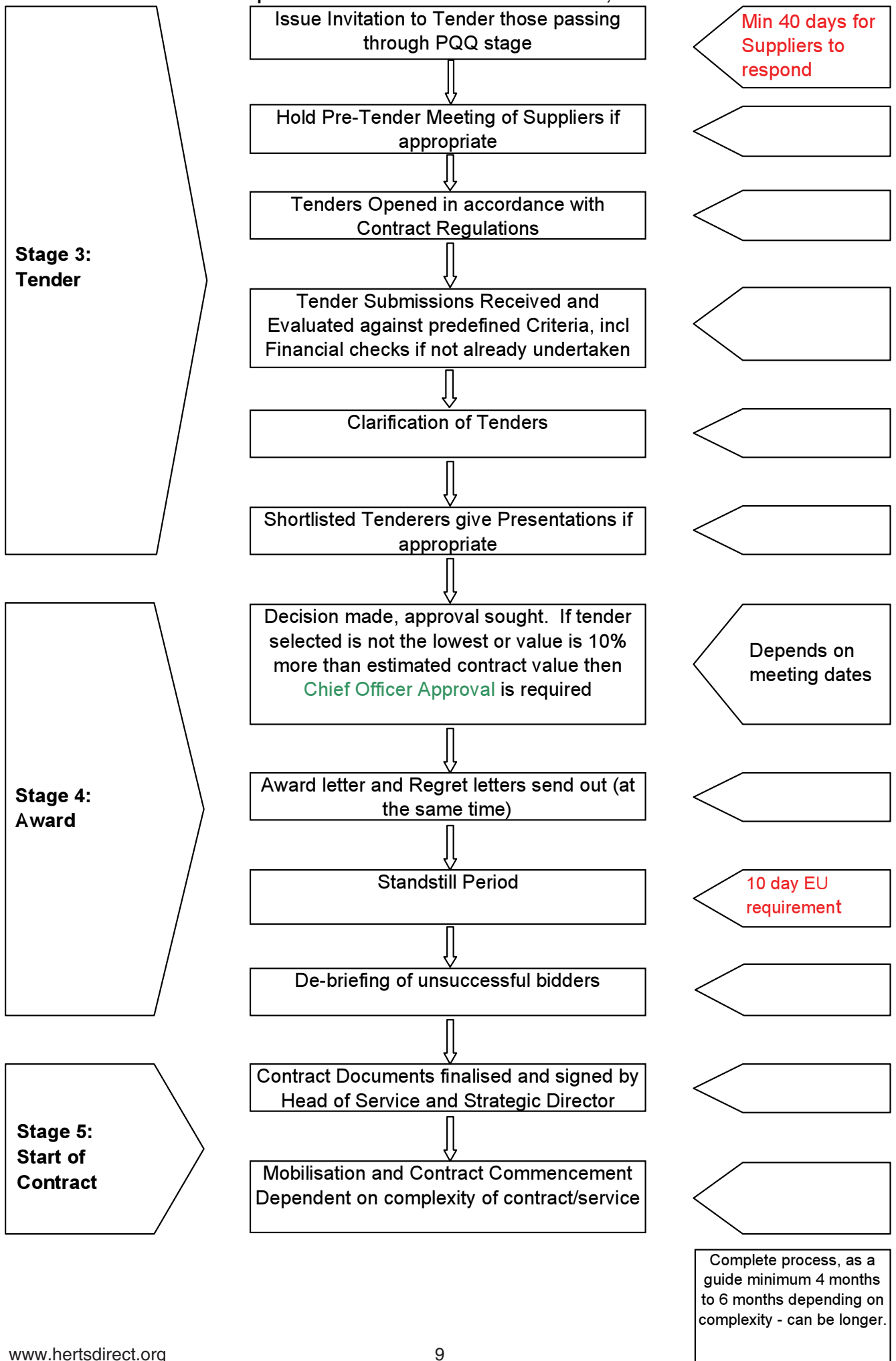
- Documents may look daunting but don't be put off
- Read the guidance notes carefully
- Only complete the areas that are relevant to your organisation
- Don't be frightened of asking for advice/guidance regarding the completion of the document
- Please remember that the document should be returned in its original format. If you want to add additional information you can do so either on the continuation sheets at the end of the PQQ or as a separate document.

5. THE TENDERING TIMETABLE, ILLUSTRATING THE STEPS INVOLVED.

More Complex Contract Procurement Process - Over £10,000 but under EU Threshold
For Contracts in excess of £144,371 EU rules apply extra steps shown in red



More Complex Contract Procurement Process - Over £10,000 Continued



6. USEFUL CONTACTS AND INFORMATION

To access the HCC Contract Register and Tender Opportunities and to register to receive e-mail alerts go to:

<http://www.hertsdirect.org/contractsandtenders>

Other information for suppliers can be found on the Business and Consumer section of HertsDirect. Then go into How to Do Business with the Council where you will find lots of useful information.

For help with the Tendering and PQQ Process in Hertfordshire County Council contact:

Carol Weller, Purchasing Manager
on 01707 292460
carol.weller@hertscc.gov.uk

Paul Davies, Contract Development Team Leader
on 01707 292352
paul.davies@hertscc.gov.uk

For help with Tender Opportunities, the Contract Register and the e-mail alert system contact:

Evelyn Poulton, Purchasing Consultant
on 01707 292362
evelyn.poulton@hertscc.gov.uk

REMEMBER WE ARE HERE TO HELP AND WE DO WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE ADVICE AND GUIDANCE WHERE NEEDED. BY DOING THIS IT ASSISTS US IN ENSURING THE INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY YOUR ORGANISATION IS ASSESSED IN A FAIR AND TRANSPARENT METHOD.

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