

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION REQUESTED ON THE BRIEF

Business Support Commission

March 2017

- 1) How will the business support service work with the Local Enterprise Partnerships' Growth Hubs?

The commissioned organisations or individuals will need to work with the two Growth Hubs that cover the Winchester District to cross promote business support activities and to avoid duplication of support.

The Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Hub (www.enterprisem3growthhub.co.uk) covers the majority of the Winchester District. However, some businesses in the southern wards of the District will be covered by the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Hub (www.solentgrowthhub.co.uk/transforming-solent).

The map below shows the area covered by the Solent Growth Hub and you can check individual post codes on the website's postcode checker.



- 2) Do you imagine any digital/smart training work would be procured through the attached specification, or is it potentially something Winchester City Council may look at separately?

Training businesses in how to make best use modern technologies would be part of this commission. Winchester City Council would want to identify the subjects of any training with the successful bidder, which may well include digital skills, as well as other subjects.

3) What is covered in the commission fee?

The fee for the commission is £20,000 per annum for two years. There should be no anticipation of further funding from the City Council for the costs of running the service. This means that the commission fee includes all costs associated with the commission including: venue hire, the commissioning of business support consultants, trainers and speakers as well as management costs. Bidders can choose to charge a minimal cost for training courses in order that delegates place a value on the training and to help augment the budget. Bidders need to include a breakdown of their anticipated costs as part of their bid.

4) Question around the financial weaknesses or associated risks and capacity of the bidder to deliver and why this is a consideration for the council.

Winchester City Council needs to make sure that the service can be sustained over the period of the contract, and with fairly minimal intervention from us. The Council does not want to have to get too closely involved in delivering the service, as we need to focus our resources on other things.

5) Can you please explain if the networking you anticipate is attendance and promotion of the services which will be offered by this Business Support project by the successful bidder, and not set up, arrangement or funding of such networking? and will this be 12 sessions in year one or 6 in years 1 and 2 (assuming the project closes in 2 years, that there will be little point in networking to promote the service in the last 6 months of year 2?)

The subjects of networking will be agreed with the Head of Economy and Arts in advance but are not intended just to promote the service itself. The commission fee includes provision of networking and training courses which includes funding set up costs such as room hire, catering and the costs of trainers and speakers and organising the events. The specification indicates that the commissioned organisation will provide at least 10 training sessions and at least 12 networking sessions at locations across the District. This is 10 and 12 sessions per annum rather than over the life of the contract. This means that the commissioned organisation will need to deliver a total of 20 training course and 24 networking sessions over two years.

6) How will businesses be referred to the service and are there existing referral systems in place?

The commissioned organisation will need to encourage referrals through effective marketing (Winchester City Council can assist with distribution of marketing material) as well as setting a referral process with key local business groups, for example Winchester Business Improvement District and the Denmead Business Forum.

7) Does the one to one business support have to be face to face?

Our commissioning approach allows for individuals and organisations, who are experts in their field, to come up with what they consider to be the most effective way of delivering business support in the Winchester District. Bidders should however provide evidence which indicates why their recommended approach is the best option for businesses.

8) When does the service start?

Winchester City Council is looking for a service to support businesses over a two year period from 1 June 2017.

9) What is your target market for end users of the service?

The target market for the new business support service is small to medium sized businesses (SMEs). The service would be able to help larger enterprises as well but marketing will be specially focused at SMEs.

Pre-start up businesses would be eligible for business support. We are looking for the bidder to indicate how they will prioritise one to one business support.

Winchester's economy is built on five main sectors as set out in the [Winchester District Economic Strategy 2010 to 2020](http://www.winchester.gov.uk/business/economic-development) (www.winchester.gov.uk/business/economic-development).

These sectors are:

- public administration and business services
- land based industries
- tourism and recreation
- knowledge and creative industries
- retail

10) What is the wider aim of the commission?

The commission should fulfil the aims of the Winchester District Economic Strategy, mentioned in question 9.

The strategy's vision is:

“Our vision for a prosperous economy is of a dynamic and creative Winchester, in which traditional assets and qualities underpin innovation and entrepreneurship for the long term benefit of everyone who lives, works and visits here.”

11) Can you tell us about the existing provision for business support including number of training courses and networking events held?

Winchester City Council is currently working with Southern Entrepreneurs, who are part of Eastleigh Borough Council (EBC), to provide networking, training and one to one business support. The team are also working with Creative Eastleigh, also part of EBC, to provide an arts advisory service for creative businesses. The latter involves advice surgery sessions which take place in Winchester City Centre and pre booked one to one business advice.

The business support service being commissioned looks to replace this current support and add additional support. By recommissioning the Council can ensure that it is getting value for money. The Council is encouraging potential bidders to look beyond what is currently delivered and consider how they can add value and come up with innovative ideas and solutions to providing business support in the Winchester District. The new specification is for a higher value so the Council will be looking for additional services.

The current service level agreement (for financial year 2016/17) with Southern Entrepreneurs requires the provision of 11 training courses per annum with an average of 14 businesses from the Winchester District attending training events. There is also provision for 11 networking events over the year with an average of 20 businesses attending.

Creative Eastleigh were asked to provide up to 30 one to one arts advisory sessions and 10 arts surgery sessions in this financial year (2016/2017).

12) Can you send us information on your Better Business for All programme?

There's more information about the Council's Better Business for All Programme, including case studies and improvements for businesses here:

www.winchester.gov.uk/business/better-business

13) Can the operator present a pricing differentiation for different services and for businesses that are located in the Winchester City Council area?

Yes, the Council would welcome a pricing structure that gives discounts to businesses that are located in the Winchester District.

14) Can the city council help with distributing publicity material? Can you tell us about the council social media presence?

It is envisaged that the bidder would be responsible for publicising the service and that any publicity material would credit and be approved by the Head of Economy and Arts.

The Council can help with distributing publicity material through our existing business and arts databases, networks and social media channels.

The Council has 11,800 Twitter followers, many of which are businesses, and

1,900 Facebook likes.

- 15) Questions around the bids that have been submitted and whether there has been a lot of interest.

For reasons of commercial confidentiality the Council can not disclose information about prospective bidders.

- 16) Are you not happy with the current providers?

The current suppliers have been fulling the obligations laid out in their agreements with the Council. By recommissioning the Council is testing the market and ensuring that it is getting value for money. This commission isn't however, a straightforward replacement of what is being currently provided as we have added additional features such as mentoring. Our commissioning approach looks to potential bidders to come up with innovative solutions to providing business support for the Winchester District.

- 17) Do you envisage this would be a full time job for someone?

It's up to the commissioned organisation to decide how they want to deliver the service and whether they'd prefer one person delivering all elements of the commission. Individuals and organisations are free to join up with other organisations to deliver the commission. In these instances we'd look for one individual or organisation to be the lead bidder. Bidders are also free to sub contract out elements of the service to consultants.

- 18) I hope the specification includes carbon footprint help?

We have asked bidders to support and encourage businesses to adopt environmentally friendly working practices and for bidders to have an understanding of environmental and sustainable issues for businesses. We haven't been prescriptive in the specification over how this is delivered as our commissioning approach requires potential bidders, who are the experts in their field, to come up with innovative solutions for delivering business support in the Winchester District.

Other council initiatives for encouraging businesses in the District to adopt environmentally friendly working practices are:

- The **Green Impact Scheme**, which is being delivered in partnership with the Department for Sustainability at the National Union of Students (NUS). This involves businesses completing a self assessment workbook and students from the university being trained as auditors to audit the businesses. There's more information about the scheme here:
www.winchester.gov.uk/news/2016/sep/new-free-scheme-enabling-greener-business/
- **Sustainable Business Network** - The Sustainable Business Network (SBN) runs a quarterly network in Winchester which is supported by Winchester City

Council. The free events bring together engaged and like-minded businesses in an informal setting to consider a different sustainability issue each time. This month it was “Creating and working in sustainable workspaces” www.hampshireiowsustainablebusiness.co.uk/sustainable-business-networks/

- **Sponsorship of the Green Business of the Year Award** at the Winchester Business Excellence Awards –encouraging business to up their game and adopt environmentally friendly working practices. www.winchesterbusinessawards.co.uk/

We would expect the commissioned provider to signpost businesses to these other initiatives as well as encouraging them to adopt environmentally friendly working practices.

- 19) The specification mentioned a six monthly payment in section 2.4. Is the frequency of payment negotiable?

The frequency of payments is negotiable. Winchester City Council’s priority is to commission the right operator for our local business’ needs, and we would flex the payment plan in order to achieve this.

- 20) Why will the Council undertake financial checks on bidders?

The Council need to be sure that the successful bidder is financially secure and therefore able to carry out this work for the full commission period.

- 21) What insurances are required of the bidders?

The Council needs to limit its own liability and that of its insurers, therefore bidders must have adequate insurance in place to deal with claims relating to advice they have given.

- 22) If our overall team is large, do we need to submit all of their CVs and bring them all to interview?

A summary of CVs is acceptable, so long as the main reasons for choosing those individuals is clear from that summary. If in doubt, please include full CVs. Likewise, it is not necessary to bring a large team to interview, but representatives of the wider team who can communicate your proposals clearly.

- 23) Could the training and networking take place outside of the Winchester District?

The Council would prefer the training and networking sessions to take place in the Winchester District so that businesses do not have to travel too far. The Council is also looking for a geographical spread of venues across the Winchester District.

- 24) Can we submit a bid for additional activity outside the value of the contract?

There should be no anticipation of further funding from the City Council for the costs of running the service unless the Council specifically chooses to fund – on a one-off basis - goods or works that are deemed to be required to fulfil the brief effectively and which are agreed in writing with the Head of Economy and Arts in advance.

25) Are the current providers submitting a bid?

For reasons of commercial confidentiality the Council can not disclose information about prospective bidders.

26) How do we present a budget for training and networking when we don't know how many people will attend and we don't know large a venue will be needed. We are assuming the city council will provide a venue?

Bidders can choose to present their budgets on estimated numbers or budget for a best and worst case scenario. Winchester City Council does have meeting rooms that are available for hire but the costs of these would need to come out of the commission i.e. £20,000 per annum for two years.

27) Can you define small businesses please? Up to which Size Band do you go?

The target market for the new business support service is small to medium sized businesses (SMEs). Wikipedia's definition of a SME is: "In the UK a company is defined as being an SME if it meets two out of three criteria: it has a turnover of less than £25m, it has fewer than 250 employees, it has gross assets of less than £12.5m." However, the service would be able to help larger enterprises as well but marketing will be specially focused at SMEs.

28) It appears that the workshops, one-to-ones and networking events could all be held in one location in Winchester itself. Do you have strong contrary opinion?

The Winchester District is a large geographical area (www.winchester.gov.uk/about/ward-map) and covers the settlements of Alresford, Bishop's Waltham, Denmead, Wickham and Winchester. The Council would expect the training and networking to take place at various venues across the Winchester District.

29) Before the tranche is paid to the supplier (subject to successful delivery of the Business Support Scheme) someone will determine if this is successful. Who will do that?

Kate Cloud, Head of Economy and Arts

30) A short Mid-term project report is required for the payment of the other tranches. Again who approves and what criteria are used for the approval?

Kate Cloud, Head of Economy and Arts, would approve the project report. The milestones for the project would be agreed at an inception meeting with the successful bidder and Kate Cloud, Head of Economy and Arts. This meeting would be held on Wednesday 10 May.

31) For the Contract Inception Meeting and the following 4 quarterly meetings in Winchester, are they to be held in Winchester and who would attend?

The council would envisage that these are most likely to take place in Winchester but it is something we could discuss on appointment. The meeting would be with the commissioned organisation and Kate Cloud, Head of Economy and Arts, and other officers from the council may attend on an ad hoc basis for example the Economy and Arts Development Manager.

32) On Wed 3 May, the Panel will want to meet the personnel who will actually be delivering the commission at interview. We have a full range of consultants who would be delivering some of the services. May we just bring along the Lead Consultant, for this Commission?

Yes.