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**Market Engagement Questionnaire**

**Contract for Public Analyst Testing Services**

**Closing Date for Return: Friday 26th March**

**MARKET ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

**PLEASE NOTE THIS IS NOT A CALL FOR COMPETITION IT IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**SECTION ONE**

**Introduction and purpose of this document**

Gateshead Council (the Council) is in the process of renewing its Contract for Public Analyst and Testing Services which is due to expire on 31st December 2021.

As part of this process the Council is conducting a Market Engagement Exercise to establish the level of interest in this opportunity, to gather information and improve our understanding of the market.

Suppliers are invited to consider the inquiries detailed within this Market Engagement Questionnaire and complete the questionnaire in Section Two.

Please note: this Market Engagement Questionnaire is **for information only** to assess the reaction of the market and inform the future procurement process to ensure it is more focused and efficient. Written responses to this Market Engagement Questionnaire will not be evaluated, scored or included in the assessment of any tenders submitted in any future procurement process.

There is no commercial advantage or disadvantage to your organisation as a result of being involved in this Market Engagement Exercise, however, responses to this Market Engagement Questionnaire are highly valued and will assist the Council in determining the most appropriate approach to the market and in creating a procurement process (if considered appropriate) which is well-framed, focused, feasible and likely to be of interest to the market.

The Council will consider all information supplied in response to this Market Engagement Exercise, however it cannot commit to using all the information and suggestions received to inform any future procurement.

**Confidentiality Statement**

The contents of this Market Engagement Questionnaire and of any other documentation sent to you in respect of this Market Engagement Exercise are provided on the basis that they remain the property of the Council and must be treated as confidential. If you are unable or unwilling to comply with this requirement you are required to destroy this Market Engagement Questionnaire and all associated documents immediately and not to retain any electronic or paper copies.

By registering an interest in this Market Engagement Exercise you agree to use this information solely for the purposes of responding to this Market Engagement Exercise.

Once this Market Engagement Exercise has concluded you agree to destroy this Market Engagement Questionnaire and all associated documentation save for one copy which may be held physically or electronically for a period of one year after the issue of any contract award notice in respect of this procurement and shall only be used in connection with the procurement by the Council.

Please be aware that the Council is subject to the disclosure requirements under the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations. For this reason, the Council would strongly advise that any information you consider to be confidential is clearly labelled and marked as confidential.

Subject to the Council’s requirement to comply with the provisions of the Freedom Information Act / Environmental Information Regulations, any commercially-sensitive information provided to us as part of this process will be treated in confidence, used only for the purposes of this Market Engagement Exercise, and will not be disclosed to any other organisation.

The Council appreciates the time and effort taken to complete and submitting this questionnaire All responses will be treated as confidential and commercial in confidence and will not in any way be shared with or used in the later assessment of any proposals submitted by yourselves as part of a formal procurement process.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire and for your interest in working with us.

**Background and Context**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

*The Council is looking to implement a Contract with a suitable qualified and experienced external contractor to deliver a range of testing services*

It is intended that the Public and Agricultural Analyst will be appointed as the official Public Analyst for Gateshead Council for the duration of the contract.

Samples will be taken by The Council and the contracted supplier will be responsible for examination and analytical testing. Samples may include formal and informal food and feed samples, complaint samples and water samples. The samples will be transported by courier from an agreed central collection point in Gateshead to a UKAS accredited testing Laboratory.

The supplier will provide The Council with laboratory analysis reports detailing the requested information. A list of the tests and analysis reports that may be required is attached (Please see appendix 1).

**Laboratory Quality System Standards**

The Laboratory database system must be connected to the UK Food Surveillance System (UKFSS) database. This enables results to be uploaded via the internet to the national database for food enforcement. The laboratory must be able to receive sample requests and communicate results of analysis and testing through the FSA UKFSS system, or equivalent common shared electronic system.

The laboratory must be accredited to the European Standards specified in Regulation 2017/625.

In the UK, accreditation is undertaken by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) and official feed and food laboratories include

* Public and Agricultural Analyst Laboratories
* Public Health England and other microbiological laboratories that undertake work for local authorities
* Laboratories that undertake work for the central competent authorities and their agencies or Directorates, such as the CRD and the VMD.

**Reporting and Database**

On Request, The Analyst will provide management information in an electronic format for The Council. This information will relate to (but is not limited to) the following:

* Number and names of samples tested
* Charges levied
* Status reports for all samples received with projected reporting dares

Laboratory analysis reports must provide standardised interpretation and comments based on legislation and guidelines.

**Data Protection**

The Laboratory must comply with all data protection and privacy laws and regulations in any relevant jurisdiction.

Technical and organisational measures to protect personal data and samples against accidental or unlawful destruction or accidental loss, alteration, unauthorised disclosure or access must be implemented.

**Transport of Samples**

The Contractor is required to arrange to courier samples from agreed central collection point(s) to the testing Laboratory on a weekly basis.

For samples that are deemed by The Council to be urgent, The Courier is required to arrange collection within 3 working days.

The collection points shall be to the following locations; or as advised during the life of the framework:

* Gateshead Council, Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead, NE8 1HH
* Tyne & Wear Mereology Laboratory, Saltmeadows Road, Gateshead, NE8 3AH

**Specialist Support**

If requested by The Council, The Laboratory must participate in Local Food Liaison Groups and the Compositional Sampling Group Meeting. In support of this, upon request, The Laboratory must attend meetings and provide advice to The Council (in writing if necessary).

The Analyst will be required to assist officers of The Council in preparing annual sampling plans by providing reports on previous work and current issues relating to products.

The Analyst must act as an Expert Witness in court and provide written statements containing the results of the test(s) or a report containing the results. The Analyst must be an analytical specialist who can provide expert advice on the interpretation of legislation and produce certificates of analysis which are submitted as evidence in legal cases with regards to the adulteration, contamination, description and composition of food and feed, drugs and commercial products.

The Analyst must be able to provide one training session to employees of Gateshead Council.

It is critical that specialist advice is available to The Council on a 24/7 basis. Therefore, an Out of Hours Support Service must be provided for specialist advice. The out of hours support service must provide emergency advice from the Public Analyst during **all hours** laboratory is closed.

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**SECTION TWO**

**Request for Information for market engagement purposes**

We would like to gain your views through the following:

* Completion of the Market Engagement Questionnaire included within this document.

1. **Indicative Timeline**

1.1 The indicative timetable for the Market Engagement Exercise is as follows :-

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| Issue Questionnaire | 16th March 2021 |
| Return of Questionnaire by | 26th March 2021 |

1. **How to Respond to the Market Engagement Questionnaire**

2.1 All responses should be provided by completing this questionnaire and uploading your responses via the NEPO e-tendering system <https://procontract.due-north.com> before the deadline set out in 1.1 above.

* 1. Please answer all questions as indicated.
  2. Brochures or other general market information should not be attached in addition to this.
  3. If you have any queries regarding the questionnaire or this exercise please send your enquiry using the NEPO e-tendering system.
  4. The Council will answer all enquiries regarding this Market Engagement Exercise via the NEPO e-tendering system. We will keep the source of any questions confidential and will circulate all questions and answers to all enquirers for information. The final deadline for queries is 8th March 2021.
  5. Submission of your completed questionnaire together with any supporting documents (where requested) must be returned electronically via the NEPO e-tendering system before the deadline.
  6. The Council reserves the right to seek further clarification where this would assist in informing the process and developing appropriate and innovative service specifications.
  7. If you have any difficulties accessing the NEPO e-tendering system, then please contact:

Proactis Supplier Support Helpdesk Ticketing System (http://proactis.kayako.com) - To be used by Suppliers for non-time critical issues i.e. password resets / account queries, finding information, etc.

Email (ProContractSuppliers@proactis.com) - To be used in same way as ticketing system. Any emails to this address will auto-log a support ticket on Proactis Supplier Support Helpdesk

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

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| **ORGANISATION DETAILS** | |
| **Organisation Name** |  |
| **Contact Name** |  |
| **Position** |  |
| **Organisation Address** |  |
| **Organisation Telephone Number** |  |
| **Organisation email Address** |  |

**Questions**

**1.**

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| The Council are looking for informal expressions of interest in delivering the Contract for Public Analyst Testing Services at this stage to establish the level of market interest.  Would your organisation be interested in bidding for this opportunity?  Yes / No (Please delete as appropriate)  Please provide brief details of the services that your organisation is able to deliver. |

2.

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| Are there any other comments that you feel need to be considered?  If you submit your response as a separate attachment, please label as Question 3. |

5.

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| Do you have previous experience of tendering for contracts with Gateshead Council? If so please state how this process was undertaken i.e., e-mail, e-tendering system etc and if you feel any improvements could be made to that tendering process.  If you submit your response as a separate attachment, please label as Question 5. |

6.

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| Do you have any other public-sector clients at present? If so please state the names of the organisations and a brief outline of the services you have provided to them along with approx. value.  If you submit your response as a separate attachment, please label as Question 6. |

7.

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| What risks, issues or concerns do you envisage with the procurement of the proposed Contract and what could the Council do to minimise these?  If you submit your response as a separate attachment, please label as Question 7. |

8.

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| The Council has made a number of pledges which will become central to all contracts that we procure. The Council pledges to:   * Put people and families at the heart of everything we do * Tackle inequality so people have a fair chance * Support our communities to support themselves and each other * Invest in our economy to provide sustainable opportunities for employment, innovation and growth across the borough * Work together and fight for a better future for Gateshead   To help us understand how able our supply chain is to sign up to our pledges, we have developed a Corporate Social Responsibility Pledge Questionnaire (please see Appendix 1). By completing this questionnaire, you will be assisting the Council in building a better picture of supply chains, encouraging good business practice, determining minimum standards for specific contracts, and helping us to identify what additional support you may need.  Please complete and return the questionnaire to annahbaines@gateshead.gov.uk. |

Please return your completed Market Engagement Questionnaire by **12 noon on 26th March 2021.**

**APPENDIX 1 - GATESHEAD CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PLEDGE QUESTIONNAIRE**

(See separate attachment)