



## Spelthorne Borough Council Procurement Policies & Procedures

### 08\_Drafting a Specification

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## Drafting a Specification

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### CONTENTS

1.	Introduction: What is a Specification?	
2.	Purpose	
3	Types of Specification	
4..	Specification template	
5.	Content of the Specification	
6.	Summary	
7.	Reference to other SBC Policies	

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### 1. Introduction: What is a Specification?

A Specification is a set of documented requirements which, in the sense of a procurement project, will be issued to the supply market to ensure that the procured goods, services or works are fit for purpose, and offer the required quality at the most reasonable cost. A Specification may also include technical or qualitative standards, depending on the object of the Specification.

### 2. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that officers undertaking a procurement project fully consider their requirements and include these in their project Specification. This will ensure that the required outputs and outcomes are delivered. The Specification will be referenced in all other tender documents and will be used to drive performance and develop key performance indicators by which the contractor's contract delivery will be measured. It will generally be included as part of the contract documentation.

### 3. Types of Specification

In terms of describing the requirements to be achieved from a procurement process, there are generally three types of Specification: input Specification; output (or standards) Specification; and outcome Specification, as described below:

#### INPUT SPECIFICATION:

An input Specification includes very clear inputs, ideas or descriptions proposed as a requirement for the goods, works or services.

An example of this would be a grounds maintenance contract which specifies that the contractor will cut the grass every week of the year.

Advantages of an input Specification such as this are that it is easy to monitor performance, and check that the requirement is being fulfilled. An obvious disadvantage in

this case is that it is an over-specification for many times of the year, e.g. in winter when the grass will not need cutting at all, but the contractor may be in breach of the contract by not fulfilling the requirement. Almost certainly, the cost of this contract would be overstated.

Input specifications are most appropriate where there is a requirement for repeated and consistent standards over the whole length of the contract, and where that standard can be specified to its lowest need (e.g. fortnightly, instead of weekly) to prevent over-costing.

#### OUTPUT SPECIFICATION:

An output Specification describes a standard that must be achieved at all times, or at a certain percentage of times. An example of an output specification, in the grounds maintenance contract as above, would be to state that the grass must at all times have a neat and uniform cut of grass, consistent with the purpose for which the grass will be used, and that the edges will be trimmed and borders edged. The Specification may include a reference to an estimated number of cuts, per season, whilst noting that it is the contractor's responsibility to achieve the standard expected, rather than fulfil the number of cuts.

#### OUTCOME SPECIFICATION:

Outcome Specifications describe what the contract must *achieve*. These are used less frequently, as it can be difficult to attribute the achievements to the contract actions alone; other factors may contribute to the outcome. As an example, the Council may wish to achieve healthier communities and believes that better maintained open spaces may encourage residents to spend time relaxing and exercising outdoors. A step towards the better open space may be that the grass is well cut. Whilst the grounds maintenance contractor has no influence over the *outcome* (healthier communities), they can ensure that the open space is well maintained (by keeping the grass neat and uniform).

Input and Output specifications are more typically used.

## 4. Specification template

The Specification template at Appendix A should be used for all projects over £40k, where Corporate Procurement support is required. The template may also be used for lower value projects and can be adapted in a shorter version if this seems excessive for a lower value need.

## 5. Content of the Specification

The more detailed the content that can be provided within the Specification, the clearer the requirement will be to the market, and the greater the opportunity for fulfilling the requirement.

AUTHOR:

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However, officers should avoid over specifying the need, which would inevitably result in higher costs associated with the contract delivery.

The Specification should identify those aspects of the contract which are essential, those which are desirable, and those which, in some cases, must not be included. For example, in an IT contract, it may be essential that data is stored in the UK and mainland Europe, desirable that it is only within the UK, and / or must not be stored outside of the EU to meet the requirements of GDPR.

Officers should be clear to specify not only the quality of the requirement, but the length of time the contract will be required, the personnel who will be required (and for the duration of the contract), the skills and capabilities that the provider will be expected to have. Social value which the contract must deliver and any technical or quality standards (e.g. ISO accreditation) that you will need the contractor to demonstrate should also be included.

If in doubt, seek help from Corporate Procurement. **Summary**

This Procedure provides guidance on developing a Specification of requirements prior to tendering. The Procedure acknowledges that the Specification is a key document used to inform the market of the need, drive the performance of the contractor, and is included as part of the contract document.

It is important to use the right type of specification – input, output or outcome – to achieve the best value contract possible.

It is important to highlight any critical aspects of your requirement which must be included as well as those which must not.



## **Specification of Requirements**

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**[INSERT NAME OF PROJECT HERE]**

This template is to be used for drafting a Specification of Requirements for the procurement of goods and / or services.

## **CONTENTS**

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT**
- 3. SCOPE OF THE CONTRACT**
- 4. DETAILED REQUIREMENTS**
- 5. ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY**
- 6. CONTRACT MANAGEMENT & REVIEW**
- 7. GENERAL DATA PROTECTION, EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND  
PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**Appendix 1 – Changes that can occur during the lifetime of a contract.**

## **1. Introduction**

[This section should provide an overview of the Authority and the procuring Department, its function and remit]

## **2. Background**

[This section provides background information in respect of the requirements. Details of the business objectives to be delivered by the goods or services should be included]

## **3. Scope of the Contract**

[Cover broad details of what is included and what is excluded. This will enable full pricing and resource planning by the tenderer. The more detailed this is, the less the risk of the tenderer guessing, or pricing for unknowns]

## **4. Detailed Requirements**

[Include in this section the detailed requirements that the tenderer is required to meet: delivery location for the goods or services; timescales (when required); quantity; quality expected; technical specification; resources and reporting structures; business continuity plans; etc)

Consider whether the Specification will define outcomes, outputs or inputs]

### **4.1 Mandatory Requirements**

[Some requirements may be mandatory – i.e. essential to the contract - and this section should clearly detail any such requirements.

Please seek advice from Corporate Procurement to ensure that you do not discriminate against some sectors of the market who cannot meet these requirements]

### **4.2 Functional Requirements**

[These requirements define the task or desired result by focusing on what is to be achieved, rather than by describing the way it is to be achieved.

This requires tenderers to use their skills to develop smart, creative solutions.

Specifying requirements in terms of outputs or functions gives potential tenderers the opportunity to propose innovative, creative solutions (evaluation model which will set out the criteria by which all tender responses will be assessed.

The outputs should also be clearly linked to the payment schedule]

### **4.3 Performance Requirements**

[These requirements detail the performance required of the solution by setting out details of inputs and outputs. Include KPIs here.]

Example performance measures are:

- standards – compliance with/performance to the relevant European Standards (or equivalent)
- throughput – the volume of inputs that can be handled within a specified time;
- accuracy – the number of outputs that are error free (usually expressed as a percentage);
- availability – the time the solution available as a percentage of the time it is supposed to be able to be used.

### **4.4 Exit Strategy**

[Consideration should be given to whether an exit strategy is required for when the contract comes to an end and a new contractor is appointed. This will be particularly relevant if data is held by the contractor]

## **5. Environment & Sustainability**

### **5.1 Environmental**

[Consider the impact that this may have on the environment. What measures do you need to take / does the supplier need to take to minimise environmental impact? Do you need to include specific environmental standards such as FSC® timber? Does the supplier have an environmental policy in place? How will any materials be disposed of? Can any materials be upcycled?]

### **5.2 Economic**

[What economic factors have been taken into consideration? Have you considered the best use of resources to achieve the desired outcomes? Is the opportunity likely to be attractive to local and small and medium enterprises, and if not can it be enhanced to include such providers?]

### **5.3 Social**

[Have you considered what Social Value might be delivered through this requirement? How will it be measured, and how does it meet our corporate policies?]



## **6. Contract Management and Review**

[Contract Management arrangements should be outlined. The supplier may need to resource this and will need to cover the cost of this. Detail the type and frequency of contract information the bidder will be expected to provide.]

## **7. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and Privacy Impact Assessments (PIA)**

[You will need to provide details to bidders of the type of obligations they may face under the above. Discuss with the GDPR team if unclear].

## **8. Contract Period**

[Include details of the contract main term, and any desired extension periods. The contract period should be designed to achieve the maximum return on investment.

Optional extensions for recurring contracts can be included where there are uncertainties in funding and consider the contract performance before extending.

Discuss with Corporate Procurement if uncertain]