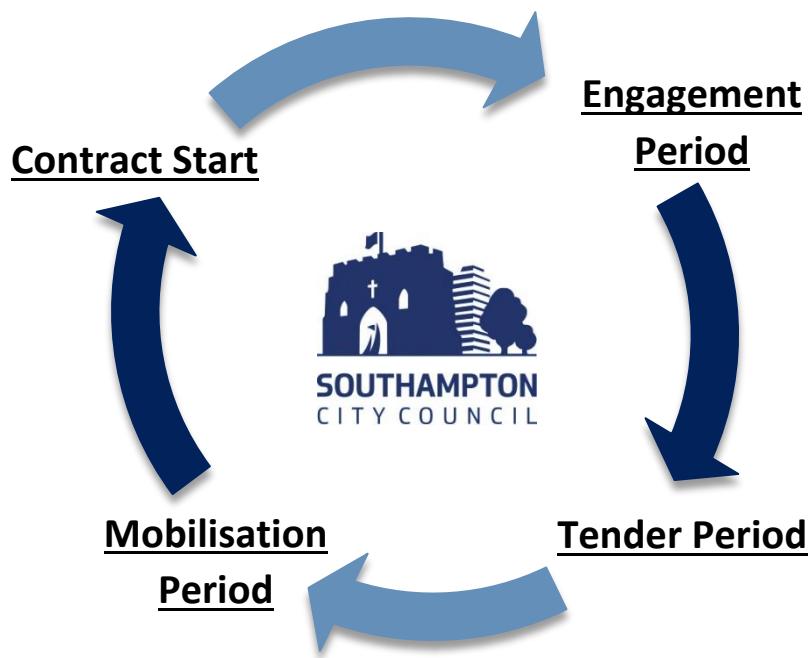


# The Commissioning Cycle

This module is a guideline of the usual procurement timescales. Whilst exact timescales differ from contract to contract, this cycle gives organisations a sense of the **deadlines** which they have to work to when preparing a bid for Southampton City Council. For contract specific provisional timelines, check the individual contract's **Invitation to Tender** document.

Please **click** on the period name in the cycle below to skip to more information.



## Engagement Period

This period, usually lasting **around 5 months** is the time when commissioners work out the specific details of the service to be provided. To do this, relevant potential providers are often invited to discussions with the Council, called **engagement events**.

All bidders are encouraged to **attend engagement events** during this period wherever possible.

### Benefits of attending engagement events:

- It gives potential bidders the opportunity to **shape the service** before the specification is finalised.
- Potential bidders can **raise issues**, such as **timescale difficulties** and there may be some **leeway** to extend tender timescales or start the tender period at a different time if the proposed period is a particularly busy one for most potential bidders.

- Although commissioners are **unable to divulge tender details** prior to the Invitation to Tender (ITT), engagement events are an opportunity to **discuss** less specific aspects of the contract, enabling potential bidders to start the tender period better informed of the process.

To view contract opportunities during this period, organisations can register with the **Supply Southampton Portal**, an online database displaying all of the Council's **current** and **potential contracts**. When organisations register, they can choose to **receive notifications** about relevant contracts. Alternatively, basic information about current contract opportunities can be viewed on the Portal without registering.

## Tender Period

### Issue of Invitation to Tender (ITT)

- The ITT is a formal notice of the **beginning of the tender period**
- Tender **documents** become **available** on **Supply Southampton Portal**

### Market Event

- During the **first 2 weeks** following the ITT, there will usually be a Market Event
- If the contract is very **simple, easy or low value**, a Market Event may be **unnecessary**.
- It is an **open invitation** event used by commissioners to **discuss the details** of the contract, and is an opportunity for bidders to **ask questions**.
- Any **information given** by commissioners at this event, including answers to questions asked, will be published on the **Portal**.
  - This helps make sure that the tender process is **open, transparent** and **fair** for all bidders.

### Tender Submission

- The tender submission date will be **at least 2 weeks** after the ITT, and often more than a month after, but this depends on the contract.
- **All of the tender pack documents** that must be completed must be **submitted** by this date.
  - For more information on documents that need to be filled in, see the '**Tender Pack Documents**' information module.

## Notification of Evaluation Result

- Around a **month and a half** after the tender submission, bidders will be told the commissioners' chosen **winning bidder(s)**.
- All bidders will have the **tender documents** which they submitted **returned** with commissioners' **comments**.
- Following this is a **10 day stand-still** period before the contract is awarded.
  - This gives bidders time to challenge the commissioners' decision should they feel that there has been a failure to follow the required process

## Mobilisation Period

### Contract Award Date

- The mobilisation period begins when the **contract** has been **officially awarded** to the winning tender after the 10 day stand-still period.

The mobilisation period will be a **minimum of 3 months**, possibly longer if the winning bidder can explain the need for a longer mobilisation period to commissioners.

- This is a really important period for **putting the service into place** and **ironing out any issues** before the contract starts.
- If an existing service is being taken over by a new provider because of a new contract, providers may want to consider whether **Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE)** will apply.
  - If organisations are unsure whether TUPE applies, they are encouraged to seek professional advice.
- Sometimes, it will be the **same provider** who will be continuing to provide the service following the award of a new contract.
  - But, commissioners will often want to use this time to meet with organisations to **confirm any changes** to the service under the new contract.

## Contract Start

- The service must be **fully functional** by this date.
- After this date, the service provider will be **periodically monitored** using **Management Information** and **Performance Indicators**.
- If the same service is due to be continued through a new contract, then commissioners will start the engagement period again in good time, usually around 18 months before the contract expires.