



10 DOWNING STREET

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**Department for
Communities and
Local Government**

The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP
*Secretary of State for Communities
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***Department for Communities
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Dear Colleague

Are you one of the "Best councils to do business with"?

Small businesses are the heartbeat of the British economy. They are central to driving job creation, economic growth and innovation; and they can provide the kind of local, innovative solutions that deliver better value and efficiency for local authorities. But all too often we hear that small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are being excluded from public procurement opportunities through the imposition of overly bureaucratic processes or a simple lack of engagement by local commissioners.

Many local authorities are already doing a lot to support small businesses, including social enterprises and voluntary and community sector organisations. We want these examples of excellent practice to gain the recognition they deserve; so that other councils can learn from them and that small suppliers can come forward with more confidence in bidding for local government business.

That is why today we are launching a contest to identify and celebrate the stand-out councils [across England], that are taking a supportive approach to engaging SMEs in their procurements. Entries will be assessed against the following criteria:

- How you recognise the value of small business suppliers in your procurement.
- How small businesses can find out about your Council's procurement opportunities.
- How you measure and account for your procurement with small businesses.
- How your procurement bidding and contracting processes support small businesses.

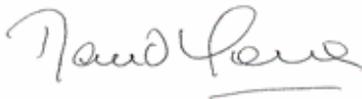
We also want to know what other local authorities could usefully learn from your procurement approach with small businesses, and the next big thing you have planned to help small businesses increase their chances of winning more of your contracts. We would expect the winning councils to provide evidence against all of the criteria. We may also seek corroborating evidence from local businesses.

The final winning councils – the “best councils to do business with” – will be selected by a panel from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Confederation of British Industry (CBI), British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), Local Government Association (LGA), Cabinet Office, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

The competition winners will be invited to a reception at Number 10 Downing Street to share and celebrate their success. We are also keen to support the winners in showcasing their good practice; not only to other local authorities, but also to wider public and private sector contacts across the country.

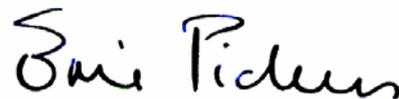
To nominate your council for this award, simply complete the form attached and return it to bestcouncils@bis.gsi.gov.uk by 5:00pm on Friday 22 February. If you need any further information about the contest, please contact Jim Jobe on 0303 444 2556.

I very much hope you will take this opportunity to show just how good your local authority is at supporting SMEs.



DAVID YOUNG

The Rt Hon, The Lord Young of Graffham DL
(The Prime Minister’s adviser on Enterprise)



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