



## South Ayrshire Council Engages with Suppliers During COVID-19 at Virtual Meet the Buyer

South Ayrshire Council participated in a planned takeover of SDP's Twitter account during the Supplier Development Programme's Meet the Buyer 2020: Live Virtual Event on 2 June 2020. Suppliers were encouraged to follow the **#MeetTheBuyer2020** hashtag and ask real time questions to the Procurement Team at South Ayrshire Council on the topic, "Exploring Quick Quotes."



[www.sdpscotland.co.uk](http://www.sdpscotland.co.uk)



South Ayrshire Council Procurement has an on-going commitment to engage with new and existing suppliers, and achieves this through local engagement events and training, as well as national participation in the Supplier Development Programme's annual Meet the Buyer event. Following the cancellation of 2020's planned face-to-face Meet the Buyer event, SDP Scotland planned virtual activities that aimed to facilitate communication with suppliers and contribute to open, connected and transparent procurement practices in Scotland's public sector during the on-going restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Working with the Supplier Development Programme promotes the Council's business to a far wider audience than we could hope to capture ourselves. Interest from suppliers in either bidding for specific opportunities, or in just making themselves known to the relevant internal services, is invaluable for the Council's efforts to achieve 'best value' in procurement. We decided to participate through our normal commitment to attend the physical event, with the support of our Portfolio Holder, Councillor Peter Henderson," said Gavin Cockburn, Acting Service Lead for South Ayrshire Council Procurement.

Gavin was joined remotely by Meghan Bryden, Procurement Assistant, David Moore, Procurement Support Assistant and Jennifer Payne, SDP Development Officer, during the Meet the Buyer 2020: Live Virtual Event. The team tweeted general tips about optimising the Supplier Finder Profile on PCS as well as the finer details involved in bidding for Quick Quotes with South Ayrshire Council.

Gavin said: "Immediate evidence of the positive impact that any SDP Meet the Buyer event can have, either virtual or face-to-face, is meeting a new supplier. This happened for us! One supplier who asked questions during our bit of the 'Twitter Takeover' then submitted business details to us, which we then shared with the relevant internal Service that is now actively looking to fulfil existing opportunities with that new supplier."

South Ayrshire Council's willingness to trying new technology to contribute to open and connected procurement was supported by SDP Scotland. Gavin said: "I cannot stress enough the importance of remaining visible to and supportive of Scottish SMEs during these difficult times. To achieve this with demonstratable outcomes, I highly recommend participation at future SDP virtual events to any of my peers throughout the public sector in Scotland and cannot praise the work of the Supplier Development Programme high enough. From having initial concerns about how we might fill an hour promoting Council procurement processes, to answering suppliers on Twitter, SDP made everything easy by encouraging our ideas, nurturing them through to their final format and assisting with all aspects of presenting these on the day of Meet the Buyer."