

Report of the Director of Customer & Business Support Services

**Update on Changes to Transparency Requirements**

**Summary**

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Audit and Governance Committee with an update following the recent government response to a consultation by the Department for Communities and Local Government on the Code of Recommended practice on Data Transparency in Local Government.
- 2 This report sets out the key changes in terms of additional information that is recommended to be published, and the action the Council is taking to comply with this.

**Background**

- 3 In January 2011, the Council began to publish data on spend and salaries in order to meet the requirements of the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) as part of its efforts to improve local transparency and accountability across Whitehall and local government.
- 4 When the Code was initially published, ministers committed to reviewing its content and scope within 18 months. Between 25th October and 20th December 2012, the Department for Communities and Local Government ran a consultation on updating the Code, and making it mandatory through regulations.

**Consultation**

- 5 The Government Response to Consultation document at Appendix A sets out the details of the additional information to be published under the revised Transparency code, along with comments from various bodies following the completion of the

consultation exercise. There has been no indication as to a formal date these additional publications will become a legal requirement.

- 6 The government is proposing to regulate to require all local authorities to provide:
  - (a) Spending transactions over £500 on a quarterly basis
  - (b) Information on a quarterly basis on opportunities to provide goods and services to the local authority worth over £5,000, and key details on contracts awarded and the outcome of procurement activity worth over £5,000
  - (c) Basic information about a local authority's land and assets on an annual basis, including reference number, address and location.
  - (d) Grants to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations should be published on an annual basis whether by tagging data on spending items above £500 or contract information, or by publishing a separate list or register.
  - (e) An organisational chart showing the top three levels of the organisation on an annual basis
  - (f) How much time is being spent on trade union activities and what proportion of the total pay bill this represents on an annual basis
  - (g) Expenditure on Government Procurement Cards on a quarterly basis
  - (h) Job responsibilities for those whose salaries exceed £50k on an annual basis
  - (i) The number of controlled off and on street parking spaces on an annual basis
  - (j) Parking revenues from on-street and off-street parking and penalty notices on an annual basis
  - (k) Constitution on an annual basis
  - (l) The ratio between the highest paid salary and the median average salary of the whole of the authority's workforce (pay multiple) on an annual basis
- 7 Responses to the consultation document highlighted the concerns of many local authorities on potential resource

implications of producing and maintaining the additional information.

## **Response**

- 8 The Council already publishes many of the suggested categories of transparency information on its website, and is currently reviewing the way this is presented to ensure both existing and new information is easy to find and accessible.
- 9 In response to the consultation document, the Council is in the process of preparing an action plan to begin the additional work required to ensure it is in a position to publish the additional information required by the revised code at the earliest point possible, ahead of it becoming a legal requirement.

## **Consultation**

- 10 Not relevant for the purposes of this report

## **Options**

- 11 Not relevant for the purpose of the report.

## **Analysis**

- 12 Not relevant for the purpose of the report.

## **Corporate Priorities**

- 13 This report contributes to the council's overall aims and priorities by helping to ensure probity, integrity and honesty in everything it does and the corporate objective of making the Council an effective organisation.

## **Implications**

- 14 The implications are;
  - (a) **Financial** – There are no specific financial implications
  - (b) **Human Resources (HR)** – there are implications in terms of significant staff resource required to prepare the information recommended by the paper in the appropriate format

- (c) **Equalities** - there are no specific equalities implications to this report.
- (d) **Legal** – it has been suggested the Government will make publication of the additional transparency information a legal requirement
- (e) **Crime and Disorder** – there are no crime and disorder implications to this report.
- (f) **Information Technology (IT)** - there are no IT implications to this report.
- (g) **Property** - there are no property implications to this report.

### **Risk Management Assessment**

- 15 There are risks involved if the Council does not take steps towards publishing the additional Transparency information recommended in the consultation now, leaving the council unprepared if they become a legal requirement at a later date.

### **Recommendation**

- 16 Members are asked to note the additional Transparency information set out in the Consultation document on the Code of Recommended Practice on Data Transparency in Local Government and the actions the Council is taking to ensure this information is published ahead of it becoming a legal requirement.

#### *Reason*

*To provide assurance to members that the Council has a clear action plan in place to ensure it meets the additional Transparency requirements ahead of them becoming a legal requirement.*

## Contact Details

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**Report  
Approved**



**Date** 4 April  
2014

## Specialist Implications Officers

Not applicable

**Wards Affected:** Not applicable

**All**



**For further information please contact the author of the report**

## Background Papers

*None*

## Annexes

- Code of recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency – *Government Response to consultation*