

Decision Number: 8 (2016/17)

Portfolio Holder Executive Decision Statement

The Local Authority (Executive Arrangements)(Meetings and Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

Subject:

Response to Government consultation on proposed changes to the Transparency Code 2015

The Government is proposing to increase the data sharing requirements for local authorities across a number of service areas and is seeking views on this, on the method of publication, and on compliance and monitoring.

In addition to the current requirements in the Transparency Code 2015, the proposed changes include the following elements:

- Land Assets: to include information on planning and housing provisions
- Procurement information: making this available in a standard format through a central portal
- Contracts: how in-house services have been market tested in a prescribed form
- Parking: to include details regarding a breakdown of income from parking charges and details about penalty charges notices
- Method of publishing: publishing data on specific websites and in specific formats as opposed to current arrangements on our website
- Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) : to publish what proportion of spend is made annually to SMEs

The response outlines a general support for the principle of sharing data, and also recognises the benefits in terms of a reduction in FOI requests and ease of access to information for those making them. However, the response also indicates that information sharing needs to be proportionate, reasonable, locally relevant to need and demand, and justified where we are able to demonstrate a clear correlation to improved services.

The Council feels that Government has not adequately demonstrated that increased information sharing has led to improved services, nor provided sufficient clarity regarding what they are trying to achieve with this new set of requirements. The Council also has concerns regarding data fraud.

Details of Decision taken

To agree the Council's response to the government consultation paper "Strengthening Local Government Transparency: Consultation on changes to the Local Government Transparency Code 2015" (DCLG May 2016) and to submit this to the Department of Communities and Local Government

(For Democratic Services use)

Decision Number: 8 (2016/17)

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the Council's views on the proposed new duty are taken into account.

All Documents considered:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/522767/Strengthening_the_local_government_transparency_code_consultation.pdf

Details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the Member when making the Decision:

Members could have decided not to respond to the consultation; however the proposed changes will place an increased burden on the Council's staff resources and in places run contrary to local plans and ambitions for its data.

Equality Impacts (Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty)

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Local Member (s), other Portfolio Holders and/or Directors/Heads of Service Consulted

Report to Policy and Performance Advisory Committee, 7 June 2016.

Members views expressed at this meeting have been incorporated into the response.

<http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s28322/10%20Local%20Government%20Transparency.pdf>


Details of any conflicts of interest

a) declared by any executive member who is consulted by the Decision Taker

None declared

b) and any details of dispensations granted by the Chief Executive in respect of any declared conflict

None granted

Decision taken by:	Portfolio Holder for Policy and Performance
Signed by Portfolio Holder	
Date of Decision	07.06.2016
Record made by:	Margaret Carr
Date of record:	20.06.2016

