

## **Update on Transparency July 2013**

### **Purpose of report?**

For discussion and direction.

### **Summary**

This report provides an update on transparency since the last report to the Improvement and Innovation Board in March 2013. It focuses on:

1. Recent government announcements on open data, transparency and the information economy
2. The open data breakthrough funding programme and
3. Data protection compliance and information sharing.

### **Recommendations**

The Board is asked to:

1. Note the recent government announcements on open data, transparency and information economy and offer any views/comments
2. Note progress on the open data breakthrough funding
3. Note the responsibility of councillors to endorse data protection in local councils and the proposed action the LGA will be taking.

### **Action**

The Research and Information Team will continue to develop the programme in the light of the Board's views.

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### **Update on Transparency: July 2013**

1. This report gives an update on data transparency and policy developments since the Improvement and Innovation Board in March 2013. It also outlines key work undertaken by the Research and Information Team over the last few months.
2. The report covers:
  - 2.1 Recent government announcements on public sector information, information economy strategy and a national information infrastructure
  - 2.2 Progress on open data breakthrough funding
  - 2.3 Data protection compliance and information sharing.

### **Government announcements on open data and information economy**

3. Government is actively promoting transparency and open data as a means to drive accountability, efficiency and growth. The government is currently consulting on a draft national action plan on transparency and open data<sup>1</sup>. It has set out a plan to drive technology-led economic growth and capacity building in its information economy strategy<sup>2</sup>.
4. In June, the government announced its commitment to release further public sector information and its strategic objective to promote the information economy in the UK and internationally. The **information economy strategy** sets out a plan for government and industry to continue to work together to drive technology-led economic growth. The government will promote the smart use of information technology and data in UK business, in particular supporting SMEs, and ensure that citizens benefits from the digital age and are able to use digital services confidently.
5. The information economy relies on public sector information that is easily and openly accessible and interoperable, based on standards and on a workforce that has the skill to make use of the data. Government is committed to develop a data capability strategy and will also establish a Smart Cities Forum, comprising representatives from Departments, cities, business and the research community. The Forum will bring together those with an interest in smart systems to develop and coordinate policy more effectively.

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<sup>1</sup> Draft Nation Action Plan on transparency and open data

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-opens-up-its-plans-for-transparency-and-open-data>

<sup>2</sup> Information Economy Strategy <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/information-economy-strategy>

6. The Government has also published an **open data charter**<sup>3</sup> signed by G8 governments that promotes the release of open data to create more accountable, and effective government and business, to drive economic growth. The Government is consulting on a **draft national action plan** on transparency, open data and open policy making. We aim to respond to the national action plan by 19 September.
7. Alongside the Open Government Partnership National Action Plan the government has also announced its response to the **Shakespeare review into public sector information**<sup>4</sup>, to support a national information infrastructure and make data more reliable, linkable and interoperable. A market assessment published alongside the public sector information review estimates the direct value of public sector information to the economy to be £1.8bn and another £5bn of indirect benefits. The value of open data to local government through efficiency savings is estimated to be £70million (Deloitte Market Assessment, 2013<sup>5</sup>).
8. As part of releasing more datasets, government indicated that:
  - 8.1 The Charity Commission has announced plans to make data from the public register of charities freely available to download and use by the end of March 2014;
  - 8.2 HMRC will consult over the summer on options for the wider sharing of aggregated or anonymised data and the release of some VAT registration information (not including financial data) as Open Data;
  - 8.3 Royal Mail will provide the Postcode Address File (PAF) for free to independent micro-businesses for one year and to independent small charitable organisations. Royal Mail will also consult in July on a radical simplification of the licensing regime for all users.
9. All of these datasets are of interest to local government to help publish spending data and grants information to the voluntary and community sector and making address data more freely available.
10. Government acknowledges the progress made in local government in publishing open data and in demonstrating innovative good practice in the use of data. Local government open data will be further defined in the forthcoming revised Transparency Code for Local Authorities which we expect to be published this summer. LG Inform is seen as a key component for releasing local government performance data.

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<sup>3</sup> Open Data Charter <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-data-charter>

<sup>4</sup> Government response to the Shakespeare Review of Public Sector Information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-response-to-shakespeare-review>

<sup>5</sup> Market Assessment of Public Sector Information <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-sector-information-market-assessment>

11. The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, which came into force in September 2012, introduces greater transparency and openness into meetings of council executives, committees and sub-committees.
12. Government also announced its intention to join two previous boards, the Data Strategy Board under BIS and the Transparency Board under Cabinet Office. The Cabinet Office will now take the lead on transparency and open data. Cllr Tim Cheetham will represent local government on the new board under the leadership of Francis Maude MP.
13. Transparency and open data continues to be a government policy focus. It links closely to economic growth, digital government, public service reform, and is a driver for innovation. The innovation zone at the LGA conference demonstrated activities and initiatives that are happening across the sector. As a sector we should consider how local government can make best use of the data, driving economy and innovation locally by:
  - 13.1 working with smart cities and the future cities projects
  - 13.2 lobbying to increase the data capability within local authorities
  - 13.3 supporting the release of national datasets where it is in the interest of the sector, but avoiding additional burdens unless funding is made available
  - 13.4 working collaboratively across the sector to link activities and foster innovation
  - 13.5 collating, sharing and promoting good practice through our learning networks and the publication of case studies as part of sector led improvement.
14. Member's views are invited.

### **Open Data Breakthrough Funding**

15. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) is granting the Local Government Association £1million for a year to manage the local government breakthrough grants and fund local authority projects over the financial year 2013/14. The fund is to help councils overcome particular technical barriers in opening up data so that the data can be more easily used in onward applications, tools and services. The fund is to enable open data release and support easier access to open data thereby supporting growth and innovation, contributing to local engagement with citizens, communities and business, and providing seed funding to create action.

16. A local government review panel was set-up, chaired by Cllr Tim Cheetham. The panel has met three times since April and has approved 11 successful projects from a total of 24 applications. Some of the applications covered consortia of local authorities. The successful projects are listed in the table below.

Table 1: Breakthrough funding approved projects

<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>Project Title</b>
Sheffield City Council	The Sheffield City Region (SCR) Open Data and Transparency Programme
Leicester City Council	The automation of the publishing of Open Data and internal MI data in a standard, machine readable, linked format
Cheshire East Council	URIs for natural neighbourhoods
Kent CC	Local government legal and business guidance as open data
London Borough of Redbridge	Making 'DataShare' available to other councils
Peterborough City Council	Index of open data sets to aid comparison across councils
Hampshire County Council	Linked Open Data Planning Register
Lancashire County Council	Lancashire Local Information Service (LIS) Project
Solihull Metropolitan District Council	Let's Publish All Our Data
City of York Council	York Open Data – Empowering communities to access services
Cambridgeshire County Council	Cambridgeshire Insight Open Data: Stimulating Economic Growth and Encouraging Innovation

17. In reviewing the proposals the panel took particular emphasis on funding projects that could be shared across groups of authorities or benefit the whole sector, such as the development of common standards or infrastructures.

18. Due to recent changes in government structures at BIS, the funding has not been released yet. As soon as it is available, the LGA will work with local authorities to issue funding, and set-up the projects. 94% of the funding will be issued to local authorities directly, 6% will be retained within the LGA for managing the programme and to bring councils together to share their experiences and learn from each other.

19. BIS has set-up a national evaluation programme to review the outcome of the programme. As part of our campaign of sector led improvement, the LGA has already

published some case studies<sup>6</sup> from the open data roadshow held in March of this year in London, Bristol and Leeds. Some were also showcased at the LGA Conference innovation zone. We plan to publish more case studies from the breakthrough funding and hope to showcase some of the projects at next year's LGA Annual Conference.

### **Data protection compliance and Information Sharing**

20. Last month the Information Commissioner, Christopher Graham, met with the LGA Chairman, Sir Merrick Cockell, to raise concerns over the number of data protection breaches in local government which have so far cost the sector almost £2million in penalties. The information commissioner had intended enforcing data audits but wanted to seek first our collaboration on how to address these breaches. Most breaches relate to human error in passing on the wrong files or losing information, often related to a lack of corporate responsibility for data protection. A lack of resources may also have contributed to a failure in endorsing guidance and procedures.
21. Local authorities manage large amounts of sensitive personal information predominantly related to children, vulnerable adults and social care which now also extends into public health. Overall local authorities take data protection very seriously and have introduced clear data handling guidance together with training programmes.
22. The extended regulatory duty of local authorities into public health also means increased responsibilities in information governance of personal information in public health data held by local authorities. The Caldicott report has just published a review into the sharing of data between health and social care. The panel found an anxiety in sharing data due to attempts to protect organisations from fines for breaching data protection laws. The panel argues that this anxiety must be changed into trust and recommends reducing barriers when it is in the interest of the patient. This demonstrates the complexities of information governance and the importance for local leadership buy-in to endorse a framework to protect confidential information
23. It was agreed that the LGA Chairman will write to council leaders in early September to remind members of their responsibility to endorse data protection in councils. The same message will be sent to Council Chief Executives. In addition we plan to support the sector with guidance and events and raise awareness through our peer reviews and challenges. We welcome the announcement by government to develop an Improving Information Sharing and Management Centre of Excellence to improve and promote better information sharing across the sector.

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<sup>6</sup> Open Data Case Studies: [http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/local-transparency/-/journal\\_content/56/10171/4049888/ARTICLE-TEMPLATE](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/local-transparency/-/journal_content/56/10171/4049888/ARTICLE-TEMPLATE).