



# TRANSPARENCY CODE

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 34/15

13 APRIL 2015

The purpose of this paper is to summarise the requirements of the update to the Local Government Transparency Code published in February 2015 – and further updated in February this year - and ask Members to agree arrangements for compliance with it.

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**No.   DETAIL**

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**1)   BACKGROUND**

- a) The Code has been issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government as part of *the Government's desire to place more power into citizens' hands to increase democratic accountability and make it easier for local people to contribute to the local decision making process and help shape public services.*
- b) The edition of the Code published in October 2014 made some of the data identified in it for regular publication as mandatory. The only change in the latest edition is the addition of information on social housing.
- c) The Code applies to a wide range of public bodies but at Town and Parish Council level only to those with either gross income or expenditure in excess of £200,000.
- d) Ventnor Town Council is now in that category and needs to comply with the Code as soon as possible: a copy has been circulated to Members and is available on the Town Council's web site by following [this link](#).

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**2)   THE CODE**

- a) The Code identifies a total of 15 datasets for publication on the Town Council's web site: Expenditure exceeding £500, Government Procurement Card transactions, Procurement information, Land and buildings, Social Housing Asset Value, Grants to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations, Organisation chart, Trade union facility time, Parking Account, Parking Spaces, Senior salaries, Constitution, Pay multiple, Fraud and Waste Contracts.
- b) Most of these apply only to Principal Authorities – the Isle of Wight Council here – with only four applicable to Ventnor Town Council at this time: Expenditure exceeding £500, Procurement information, Land and buildings and Waste Contract.
- c) For each of the categories, the Code distinguishes between *information which must be published* and *information recommended for publication* with the listing showing the detail required in each case summarised in tabular form as Annex A within the Code and made available as a separate file on our web site.
- d) The following four sections of this Report provide more detail on each of the Code's areas with a direct application to the Town Council.

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**3)   EXPENDITURE EXCEEDING £500**

- a) This is required to be published quarterly and is recommended to be published monthly. The recommendations also include the publishing of all transactions that exceed £250.
  - b) Salary payments to staff employed by the Council are specifically excluded from the information to be published.
  - c) The Isle of Wight Council has chosen to publish details on a monthly basis of all its relevant expenditure items: their February listing is available through [this link](#).
  - d) Our financial records include a monthly Purchase Ledger and publication of this on a monthly basis at the time of the publication of Town Council meeting papers would provide compliance with both the mandatory and recommended elements of the Code without requiring additional work.
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#### 4) PROCUREMENT INFORMATION

##### *Tender processes*

- a) The Code requires the quarterly publication of details of every invitation to tender for contracts to provide goods and/or services with a value that exceeds £5,000 and the recommended frequency of publication is monthly.
- b) The Code's recommendations in this area include that this be applied to tenders for contracts in excess of £500 rather than £5,000.
- c) Members will be aware that the Town Council's Financial Regulations only require a tender process for contracts in excess of £10,000.

##### *Other processes*

- d) The Code also requires the publication of the details of any contract, commissioned activity, purchase order, framework agreement and any other legally enforceable agreement with a value that exceeds £5,000.
  - e) Our financial records enable compliance with the Code in this area but the Town Council is recommended to comply at the mandatory level at this time.
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#### 5) LAND & BUILDINGS

- a) The Code requires the annual publication of details of all land and building assets including all service and office properties occupied or controlled by user bodies, both freehold and leasehold .
  - b) This will apply not only to Salisbury Gardens but to all the other areas and buildings for which the Town Council holds a current lease: First Aid Hut, Paddling Pool, Putting Green, Ventnor Central and Shore Road public toilets.
  - c) In view of the range of information required to be included on the list for each of these sites, significant additional staff time will be required to complete it.
  - d) Members are recommended to ask its Public Buildings Working Group to assist the Clerks in completing this list and to provide it to the Town Council at its meeting of 12 October.
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#### 6) WASTE CONTRACT

- a) The Code requires the one-off publication of existing waste collection contracts in line with the expenditure requirements identified in section 3) of this Report.
  - b) The Town Council has one existing Waste Contract in excess of £5,000: that with Ace Waste for its involvement in the Beach Cleaning service.
  - c) Compliance with the Code in this area is straightforward.
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#### 7) RECOMMENDATIONS

The Town Council is recommended to:

formally commit to compliance with the Code by publishing the required details of:

- i) every expenditure item on a monthly basis;
  - ii) every tender process for a contract in excess of £5,000 on a monthly basis;
  - iii) any contract, commissioned activity, purchase order, framework agreement and any other legally enforceable agreement with a value that exceeds £5,000;
  - iv) all leasehold properties held by the Town Council by 16 October 2015;
  - v) its waste contract.
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