

## Agenda Item 4

**TO:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**FROM:** Scrutiny and Assurance Manager – Deb Thompson

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### **Annual Review - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority Compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code**

#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an (annual) update on and assurance of compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code.

#### **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the current position in terms of compliance.

#### **3. Risk Assessment**

- 3.1 **Economic** – the Government believes that transparency is the foundation of local accountability and the key that gives people the tools and information they need to enable them to play a bigger role in society. It is also considered that the availability of data can also open new markets for local business, the voluntary and community sectors and social enterprises to run services or manage public assets.
- 3.2 **Political** – the Local Government Transparency Code was issued to meet 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.
- 3.3 **Social** – the Government believes that in principle all data held and managed by local authorities should be made available to local people unless there are specific sensitivities for example, protecting vulnerable people or commercial and operational considerations. It encourages local authorities to see data as a valuable resource not only to themselves but their partners and local people.
- 3.4 **Equality Impact Assessment** – completed at source.

## 4. Background

- 4.1 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published a revised Transparency Code in February 2015 as a tool to embed transparency in local authorities and set out the minimum data that such authorities should be publishing, the frequency it should be published and how it should be published.
- 4.2 Under this Code local authority means a fire and rescue authority (constituted by a scheme under section 2 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 or a scheme to which section 4 of that Act applies).
- 4.3 In July 2015 a Member-led review was undertaken, the objective of which was to provide assurance that the Authority was complying with the requirements of the Code whilst also considering its wider approach to transparency. A number of recommendations to improve compliance were made by the review group which were accepted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then the Authority in October 2015.
- 4.4 The redesigned Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) website was launched on 15 February 2016. Prior to the launch a considerable amount of effort was expended to ensure the findings of the Member-led review were incorporated into the design and the website now features a separate section for **Transparency** providing a central repository for all information demanded by the Code. Under this section there are sub sections for Constitution of Fire Authority, Organisation Structure, Procurement, Expenditure, Senior Officer Pay, Assets, Grants and Trade Union Time.

## 5. Requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code

- 5.1 Under the code the following information is to be published **quarterly**, not later than one month after the quarter to which the data and information is applicable;
  - Expenditure exceeding £500
  - Government procurement card transactions and
  - Procurement information.
- 5.2 The following (applicable) information is to be published **annually**, not later than one month after the year to which the data and information is applicable;
  - Local authority land
  - Grants to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations
  - Organisation chart
  - Trade union facility
  - Senior salaries
  - Constitution

- Pay multiple
- Fraud

5.3 The following information is to be published once only;

- Waste contracts.

## 6. Compliance with the Code – October 2018

6.1 In August 2018, the Service became aware, through the submission of a Freedom of Information request relating to Trade Union Facility Time, of a Statutory Instrument (SI) that detailed additional publication requirements.

6.2 Discussion with colleagues in the wider sector revealed that the requirements of the SI were not widely known, if at all, despite it coming into force on 1 April 2017.

6.3 The Information Governance Manager subsequently reviewed the publication requirements of the SI which are summarised below;

- Number of relevant trade union officials,
- Percentage of time spent on facility time (banded),
- Percentage of pay bill spent on facility time,
- Paid trade union facility time activities.

Further work carried out identified that the Service would only be able to provide factually correct partial information and an executive decision was taken not to publish any data for financial year 2017/18 with an undertaking that the correct data would be collected to ensure compliance in financial year 2018/19 onwards.

6.4 Full details of the SI can be found via the following link  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2017/328/made>

6.5 Notwithstanding the above, the remaining annual review has found that the Service is currently fully compliant with the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Act. The central repository for all information that the Code demands on the CFRS website entitled **Transparency** ensures that its 'presentation is helpful and accessible to local people and other interested parties'.

6.6 In addition to the requirements of this Code the Service continues to be proactive in publicising and consulting with people across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to enable it to develop and deliver to the high standards expected of it by the communities served. It does this by publishing a range of documents and resources, including strategies, plans, performance information and outcomes of internal and external audits and peer reviews, which it believes are likely to be of public interest and in an effort to be open and transparent about all

areas of work. Further, CFRS is committed to listening to the public's opinions and views through the routine use of consultations to understand public opinion but also to ensure proposals for change and further development of the Service are open and transparent.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Documents	Location	Contact Officer
Local Government Transparency Code  Review of CPFA Compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code  Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes	Hinchingsbrooke Cottage Brampton Road Huntingdon PE29 2NA	Deb Thompson Scrutiny and Assurance Manager deb.thompson@cambsfire.gov.uk