

Chief Executives' Group – North Yorkshire and York**4 September 2014****A Shared Transparency and Open Data Platform for North Yorkshire****1 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 Proposal to develop a central North Yorkshire website to host Transparency Data and other Open Data

2 Background

- 2.1 Nationally and internationally across the public sector there is a greater drive for increased transparency and openness of public information, and public bodies are releasing non-personal data for wider citizen use and benefit. The UK is classed as a world leader in this agenda, now with both mandates from central government and requests from citizens, increasingly Local Government is seen as a key driver in this wider initiative.
- 2.2 The recent announcement from DCLG in May 2014 regarding Local Government Transparency Code, identified a number of new Transparency data sets to be released and information on how the data should be released. The requirement to release data in a machine readable format allows for the information to be linked with other data sources to create new value or knowledge.
- 2.3 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests from 1 January 2013 to 31 December 2013 within North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) totalled 1255 requests, of which only 242 were rejected due to privacy related exemptions. The majority of the requests required data to be supplied in a machine readable format. There is no estimate regarding total costs of these enquiries, but it would include time spent within Veritau, by the directorate contacts and by the service manager. A coordinated and integrated information management across the sub-region would reduce inefficiency and reduce administration costs of delivering FOI requests.
- 2.4 The release of non-personal public sector data has allowed previously stored data to be linked with other previously unconnected data to release new innovation and findings. Example uses of Open Data can be found in Appendix 1.

3 Proposal

- 3.1 In response to the increase in requirements for the delivery of the Transparency code NYCC is investing in an Open Data online catalogue to better serve its needs and those of the citizens of North Yorkshire. Previously the data has been held on the current NYCC website but with increasing complexity and demand, this will prove unsatisfactory in the medium to long term.

- 3.2 In the development of the project, discussions have been held with a range of public bodies who have developed similar approaches, such as Glasgow, Leeds, Manchester, and Hampshire Councils, to understand their approach and both the challenges and the successes experienced. We have further liaised with the Cabinet Office and Future Everything (TSB Initiative), who are supportive of our aims.
- 3.3 In our investigations around the Open Data and Transparency agenda it is evident that the real value lies in working in partnership with other public bodies, to enable the citizen to access the required data in an easy and straight forward manner. In light of this we have approached a number of North Yorkshire public bodies about the potential to join together and have a single unified platform.
- 3.4 The offer is to leverage the existing North Yorkshire investment in an open data platform for the benefit of all North Yorkshire partners. We require an empowered group to be created from the interested parties to define a neutral name for the platform and discuss a unified look and feel to the site which is acceptable to all of the partners involved. The group would have long term ownership of how the site is developed to meet future demands. Partners would be required to commit to the usage of this new central resource to publish all of their existing and new Transparency and Open Data. In return NYCC would develop the site to the group's agreed specification and host the current site. Hosting requirements would need to be reviewed in the medium term and may result in a request to share longer term costs.
- 3.5 To date we have discussed the design principle of the shared platform with representatives of Craven DC, Selby DC, Harrogate BC, Ryedale DC, and North Yorkshire Police who have all confirmed an interest in moving the agenda forward. Currently Selby DC and Craven DC have both stated that they are willing to commit to the project and NYCC are currently in the process of formalising this arrangement. Harrogate BC have stated that they are interested in the wider benefits of collaborative working but currently are making use of an alternative platform. We have not discussed potential involvement with York City Council who are moving ahead with the York Data Mill, a development of the Leeds Data Mill which is a collaboration between the Public and Private sector.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 Agree to a collaborative approach in the development of the Transparency and Open Data agenda
- 4.2 Identify representatives to act on your behalf in the development of the shared platform

5 Appendices

- 5.1 Appendix 1 – Open Data Examples

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5.1 Appendix 1 – Open Data Examples

- A small start-up company explored GPs' prescription data, demonstrating that the NHS could have saved more than £200 million a year if the generic version of statins had been prescribed rather than the patented version.
- Bristol council released environmental and geographic data which contained information on gradient, surface and curb. An organisation used this data to build a mobile application which allowed wheelchair users, cyclists and pushchair users to plan their route from 'A' to 'B'. This meant that users could avoid cobbled streets and pot holes, making roads and pathways safer for customers. The information created from the application illustrates how frequently this data was accessed and how useful it proved; this was then feedback to Bristol council. The Council then utilised the data to make decisions and place procedures to improve access for wheel chair users further.
- An organisation in Manchester used street light data and crime data to visualise crime occurrences near street lights. They determined the impact street lighting had on crime by examining the level of lighting and whether the street light was fully functioning or not. In doing so, the organisation established that crime levels increased in areas where street lights were not working. This was done by visual mapping the data; this meant that the public could see the areas where the least amount of crime happened. They then agreed with the council that street lights were not needed as much. Therefore, Manchester council could switch certain street lights off at night, increasing the Council's savings.
- As a council, choice is something that we are reducing, in order to maintain an increased focus on statutory services that we offer. However, by releasing information we are enabling communities to develop their own solutions, providing them with a choice. By engaging with communities we are involving them in trying to find a solution. For instance the government of Amsterdam released information relating to cost, frequency, activities, impacts of participating on micro/activity scale and demographics of services that they provided. The outcome of this showed that active citizen participation increased in areas where budget cuts reduce service level, such as park/green area maintenance. The community accessed and utilised the data to make informed decisions and establish a group who would maintain communal green areas instead of the authority.