

Let's have a conversation about **Transparency!**

Transparency – what's the point?

Main point... Councils collect money from residents' [precept] to carry out their work so Councils need to show how it uses this public money to benefit their public or area – this is being transparent.

What things can a Council make transparent?

Decision making processes, spending decisions, finance, research, future plans and more.

Why should a Council embrace transparency?

- ✓ To satisfy legislation [or be proactive and ahead of the game for when legislation appears for your Council]
- ✓ To be the best Council it can be for its residents [accountability]
- ✓ To promote the professionalism of the Council and the sector
- ✓ Raise the profile and interest in the parish sector and the Councils work
- ✓ Encourage membership on the Council [new Councillors]

Simple tools and methods

Choose a few streams of transparency to work on first then move on to other streams eg. accounts, meeting papers, payments etc

Take a look at other Councils - benchmarking your Council against others is a way to lift the standards by example. Take a look at some Councils of a similar size to get hints and tips of how they appear transparent.

Ask someone to be a 'critical friend' to take a look at your website to find some information and report back how easy or difficult it was to find.

Check out free tools which may be useful, for example, to display your agenda with all the papers & reports on your website in one file try using a PDF merge tool, [pulls all your pdf documents into one file] - [Merge PDFs online for free | Adobe Acrobat \(United Kingdom\)](#)

Timescales and actions

If your Council is included in the legislation, quoted below, then full implementation should be sooner rather than later. If not, then your Council can pace itself to work through the points of best practice.

- Research methods others use to make information available to ease your burden
- Take a decision on if or how far back Council wants to display historical items and set some parameters
- Spread out the work

Legislation and good practice

Transparency Bill for smaller Councils [with a turnover not exceeding £25,000] link: [SI/SR Template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Transparency Bill for larger Councils [a parish council which has gross annual income or expenditure (whichever is the higher) exceeding £200,000] link: [Transparency Bill 2015 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)