

Report to Area Meetings September 2016

Transparency Code for councils with a turnover not exceeding £25k



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

SALC continues to process the many applications for funds to support compliance with the Transparency Code for the year 2016-17.

Our members are benefitting significantly from this Fund.

Tens of thousands of pounds are being paid out and we want you to obtain the money needed by your council. Have a look at the criteria carefully, some have changed and that might affect your claim from last year. Backclaim into 2015-16 if needed. Any problems or enquiries contact SALC adminsalc@btconnect.com 01473 833713.

DCLG have updated their guidance on eligibility of smaller authorities whose turnover exceeds £25,000. Provided that an authority does not exceed the turnover limit three years in a row, they are eligible to apply for funding. Please advise applicants falling under this category to leave the turnover question blank and provide details of their turnover under Question 29. The authority needs to state their turnover, mentioning any other grant payments they received or are due to receive, and confirming that their turnover does not exceed £25,000 three years in a row.

SALC believes councils will be aware of this information but it is worth emphasising that councils do not need to have their own website in order to be compliant. Councils may opt to upload relevant information on another organisation's website, for example, a village website. These councils are also eligible to apply for funding to cover equipment costs (computer, scanner, software), website costs (annual running costs – Question 17, and set up costs – Question 18), as well as staffing costs, subject to meeting the usual criteria and thresholds. Take a good look at the application form and if you require a blank form please do contact the SALC office.

Don't forget that the purpose of the Transparency Fund is to cover the extra burden incurred by smaller authorities as a result of complying with the Transparency Code. For this reason, the Fund cannot cover the cost of modernising a council's website or purchasing more modern

equipment. For example, as long as a council can upload the necessary information onto their website, even if the website has a basic design, is running on a free of charge platform, and is not mobile compatible, the council cannot claim funding from the Transparency Fund to cover the costs of setting up a new website. Also, if the council already owns a computer that allows them to perform the necessary tasks to comply with the Transparency Code, they may not apply for funding to cover the costs of a second machine. However, if the council uses a member's equipment (computer and/or scanner) and does not have its own, then they may apply for funding to purchase their own.

Towards the end of the financial year, NALC and DCLG will follow up on a sample of applications, asking applicants to submit evidence on how the money was spent. SALC will be given a list of applications within Suffolk that are being audited so that the fund managers can be put in contact with you. All applicants are responsible for holding proof of the way the grant funding was spent.

Local Council Award Scheme



*****FIRST SUFFOLK QUALITY LEVEL AWARD UNDER THE LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME*****

Congratulations to Thurston for their Quality level Local Council Award. They were commended for their engagement with the public and responsiveness to local need.

This is far from an easy Award to achieve but provides councils with a thorough audit of their council, which is never a bad thing in the quest for continual improvement!



The Foundation Award demonstrates that a council meets the minimum requirements for operating lawfully and according to standard practice.



The Quality Award demonstrates that a council achieves good practice in governance, community engagement and council improvement.



The Quality Gold Award demonstrates that a council is at the forefront of best practice and achieves excellence in governance, community leadership and council development.

Recognised as the leading Association in the country for the Local Council Award Scheme, SALC is the coordinator for the LCAS and the Accreditation Panel for a number of counties and is busier than ever with applications. Obtaining an Award is a real challenge at any level. This is a positive sign as it means councils are accessing a thorough audit which leads to improvements. Be warned; do not expect a quick response on your completed submission. The Panel has lots of submissions to consider and the assessment is comprehensive.

It is worth having a look at the LCAS Guide, available on the SALC website www.salc.org.uk to help you consider whether and at which level your council should apply. If you have any questions about the scheme, please contact adminsalc@btconnect.com and good luck with your submissions!

You might also wish to visit these websites to see how councils are presenting the public information assessed under the Award and to get a feel for the standard expected:

<http://thurston.onesuffolk.net/parish-council/>

<http://capelstmary.onesuffolk.net/>

Devolution

SALC ran a series of events with Suffolk County Council and the District/Borough Councils to help you to start/progress your thinking on the implications for local councils of the proposed change and the potential impact on communities of any resultant service changes. The sessions varied considerably from place to place as, although the presentation was largely the same, the type and range of questions was a significant variable.

As you would expect, there was much positivity about the proposals from the principal authority representatives which was sometimes matched by enthusiasm from attendees and sometimes not. Much of the debate was about the fundamental principles of the 'deal' e.g. whether there should be a mayor and whether the new combined authority would be representative or able to act effectively given the absence of some Norfolk councils. Other points or queries raised included those relating to the nature of the consultation and the telephone surveys and to the likelihood of the deal proceeding.

In relation to town and parish councils, the detail in relation to the potential impact was not yet fully formed and nor should it be as town and parish councils have not yet been fully engaged in discussions on this important topic. However, the general direction was towards more activity at a very local level.

Strong representations were made that it was essential that:

- There is a genuine and proper dialogue with town and parish councils about devolution in relation to the potential for devolving services, facilities and functions to them.
- Further consultation takes place on next steps, should the deal proceed.
- Town and parish councils are represented on the combined authority in order to ensure that comprehensive devolution and its local impacts are fully considered.

SALC Board

The considerations at the last Board included that:

- Migration was taking place to a new payroll system with greater capabilities, owing to the popularity of the service.
- 81 councils were booked in for internal audits this year.

Audits are increasingly comprehensive to help councils to obtain needed reassurances in an age of increased transparency and scrutiny for all councils. This will be particularly important for councils with a turnover not exceeding £25,000 who will be seeking to avoid qualified audits prior to the change of audit regime. A qualified audit for those councils in the year preceding the change will mean that they have to continue with routine external audit for the first year when other Transparency Code Councils are exempt. Put in place an action plan following your internal and external audit report to help avoid this problem.

- Sir Edward Greenwell should be nominated by the Board to continue as President.
- D. Poulter, P. Aldous, T. Waite and Lord Andrew Phillips should be nominated by the Board to continue as Vice-Presidents.
- The relationship with the National Association of Local Councils should be reviewed.

Training (courses held at SALC office and available by arrangement locally)

Course	Date and time	Fee (per delegate)
Planning Workshop	Monday 26 September 2016 6.30pm - 9.00pm Thursday 15 December 2016 9.30am - 12.00pm Thursday 23 February 2017 6.30pm - 9.00pm	£25 +VAT
Clerks Information & Networking Event	Friday 30 September 2016 10.00am - 2.00pm Wednesday 7 December 2016 10.00am - 2.00pm Thursday 23 March 2017 10.00am - 2.00pm	£16 +VAT Including lunch

Budgeting Workshop	Saturday 17 September 2016 9.30am - 12.30pm Thursday 6 October 2016 9.30am - 12.30pm	£25 +VAT
Councillor's Course	2 day course: Saturday 8 & 15 October 2016 9.30am - 3.30pm 2 day course: Thursday 17 & 24 November 2016 9.30am - 3.30pm 2 day course: Saturday 21 & 28 January 2017 9.30am - 3.30pm 2 day course: Tuesday 21 & 28 February 2017 9.30am - 3.30pm 4 evening sessions: Monday 6, 13, 20 & 27 March 2017 7pm - 9pm	£100 +VAT per delegate for courses held mid week £110 +VAT per delegate for courses held on Saturday's 2 day courses include lunch
Clerk's Course	Tuesday 11 & 18 October 2016 9.30am - 3.30pm Thursday 19 & 26 January 2017 9.30am - 3.30pm	£100 +VAT per delegate Offered as a two day course including lunch.
Intensive CiLCA	Wednesday 12 October & Thursday 10 November 2016 10.00am - 3.30pm Tuesday 24 January & Thursday 23 February 2017 10.00am - 3.30pm	£250 +VAT per delegate Offered as a two day course including lunch.

Contact adminsalc@btconnect.com for any training bookings