

WANDSWORTH COUNCIL RESPONSE (VIA E-MAIL)

On behalf of Wandsworth Council I would like to make the following brief responses to your consultation “Making Open Data Real”

An enhanced Right to Data – Paragraph 8.6

- We do not necessarily agree that higher FoIA costs limit would serve the Government’s aim of ensuring the publication of more data. The current costs limit only very rarely acts as a barrier to the Council in being able to meet requests. In addition, it is worth making clear that the amount of actual “data” that is published through FoIA in Wandsworth is actually very small (<5%) as the majority of requests relate to information sought by individual requesters in relation to specific matters, (for example relating to complaints, parking appeals). The responses to these requests would have marginal, if any, interest to an audience wider than the person making the request.
- In terms of the proposal for the requester to cover costs – isn’t this already provided for as part of the scheme? The existing fees regulations provide that an authority may provide information where the cost exceeds the ‘appropriate limit’ if the requestor is willing to pay the full costs of compliance. It is therefore hard to see what immediate effect this would have in terms of facilitating data release.
- In terms of FoIA internal reviews time limits – more detail is needed on this to make an informed comment. In any case we would advise that the opportunity is taken to impose a deadline for the handling of internal reviews and that the deadlines are aligned with the Environmental Information Regulations (20 working days, extendable to 40 in exceptional circumstances).
- In terms of the ICT procurement (points 7 and 8) – Our view is that this principle should be enshrined as a “wherever practically possible” option; to mandate this *could* adversely impact on the ability of SMEs and VCS service providers to bid for council service contracts.

Setting open data standards – Paragraphs 8.8 and 8.9

- We are concerned that the star ratings as proposed go very little way to indicate both the quality and range of data that a Council or other public service provider publishes.
- The code suggests that data should be published as soon as possible following production and, where practical, “local authorities should seek to publish in real time” and that “publication should be used to help address any imperfections and deficiencies”. We do have some concerns relating to this – firstly it goes against the relatively well established data quality norm of “right first time” that recognises the implications of releasing poor quality data which

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might subsequently impact on policy/investment decisions. Secondly, should it really be for residents, our most important armchair auditors, to be finding errors in our data?

Kind regards

Jon Evans
Policy Coordinator
Wandsworth Council

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