



Northamptonshire County Council

Open Data Consultation
Transparency Team
Efficiency and Reform Group, Cabinet Office
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Please ask for: Matthew Greet
Tel:
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Open Data Consultation

At Northamptonshire County Council we have been at the forefront of local government transparency, and have been committed advocates from well before the current government took office.

We support the sentiment of opening up data and information wholeheartedly. In terms of a culture and ethos of transparency, we feel we have made giant strides in this direction already, and are proud of our staff and their attitude towards openness and transparency with our customers.

Our transparency website - www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/transparency - has spearheaded the public facing elements of our transparency policy, but not at the expense of the internal considerations explored in your consultation.

In terms of quality of data, a re-profiling of our directorates and departments during this year has spread an emphasis on data collection, quality and gathering as far across our business as possible. We currently have active organisation-wide projects being carried out in fields such as data monitoring, data collection and data collation.

We have read the consultation with great interest and have some substantial comments to make regarding some of the proposals:

- In regards to enhancing a 'right to data', we believe that our sector is amply covered by the Freedom of Information Act which has been used with ever-increasing

Matthew Greet
Leadership Support & Democracy
Northamptonshire County Council
County Hall
George Row
Northampton, NN1 1AT

w. www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/transparency



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frequency by the public, media and private interests. On creation of a codified 'right to data', currently our position would be that this is unnecessary.

- In terms of the formation of transparency standards, our position ever since we took up an active transparency policy has been that allowing any openness and transparency drive to be led by the sector itself would be preferable. This then allows authorities such as us to innovate and push the envelope as far as they can envisage it. We accept that this notion of self-motivation can produce unwanted side-effects, such as the fissure developing in local government between those delivering excellent transparency and those with less commitment to the concept. We do feel guidance and standards around desirable formats in data release would be of use to bodies with less awareness of open data issues, such as re-use and exportation.
- On the subject of stimulating enterprise and market making, we are advocates of developing a secure method of open sourcing using release of open data. In certain areas of business, commissioning projects by making data widely available makes an awful lot of sense, with technology-based ventures a strong candidate. Interesting private sector examples are available of contracts being awarded via open sourcing, with relevant data and a cash payment being made available for successful 'bidders' proposing innovative ways of solving a policy problem. We believe government can play a role in exploring the possibilities of extending this kind of thinking on open data to the public sector.

Beyond the above points, Northamptonshire County Council welcomes the tone and ambition of the Open Data Consultation. We look forward to continuing to remaining at the forefront of making our information open to our customers, and to carrying on working with government to contribute to the national picture.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Greet
Transparency Lead
Leadership Support and Democracy
Northamptonshire County Council