



## Birmingham City Council

### Open Data Policy

If you have any enquiries about this Policy contact the Information and Strategy Team on 0121 675 1431 or 0121 464 2877.

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Version: 1.0

Date: 17/05/2011

Classification: NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

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## 1. OVERVIEW AND PUBLICATION PARTICULARS

### Document History

Version	Date	Purpose	Author
0.1	April 2011	Creation and Consultation	Simon Whitehouse
1.0	17/05/2011	Approved by CMT	Gerry McMullan

### Document Distribution after Approval

Name	Organisation
All staff	Birmingham City Council
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### Document Reviewers

Name	Organisation	Role
Various	Birmingham City Council	Reviewer

### Document Approval by Birmingham City Council

Name	Organisation	Role	Date
Corporate Management Team	Birmingham City Council	Authorising Body	17/05/2011

## Overview

Authority <sup>1</sup>	Birmingham City Council – Head of Corporate Information Management
Owner <sup>2</sup>	Birmingham City Council – Implementation Manager Digital Birmingham
Scope <sup>3</sup>	This Standard applies to anyone who has access to Birmingham City Council's information systems, including but not limited to employees, temporary and agency staff, contractors, third parties working for the council, partners in joint ventures with the council and elected members of the council. It concerns all electronic systems used to hold and/or process Birmingham City Council's information.
Review period <sup>4</sup>	This document will be reviewed at least annually, or more often if justified by a change in circumstances.
Related Birmingham City Council documents	
Related Service Birmingham documents	
BS ISO/IEC 27001:2005 BS 7799-2:2005 control references	<hr/> <hr/>

The objective of this document is to define what Birmingham City Council's intentions are towards publishing data for reuse on the web and the standards to which it will adhere when it does.

This is intended to allow for effective decisions to be taken on data which is required to be published in open formats online as well as non-personal data that the city additionally chooses to publish.

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<sup>1</sup> AUTHORITY: The person or organisation who is responsible for enforcing this standard

<sup>2</sup> OWNER: The organisational position of the person who has rights to authorise changes to, or disposal of, this standard

<sup>3</sup> SCOPE: The organisations or persons to whom the standard applies

<sup>4</sup> REVIEW PERIOD: How frequently the standard should be reviewed

## 2. CONTEXT

### The Transparency Agenda

In recent years there has been an increasing expectation that non-personal data held by public sector organisations will be openly published on the World Wide Web. The previous government, through the Cabinet Office, established the Opening Up Government website to promote and showcase this work. It has received continuing support from the current administration with the Public Sector Transparency Board setting out guidelines for such publication.

The Government issued a draft code of recommended practice for local authorities on data transparency ("the Code of Practice") in February 2011. This proposed code of practice seeks to codify the various transparency initiatives of the current minister for local government into one document, with a caveat that it will be reviewed within 18 months of the publication of the final version of the code of practice.

These initiatives include:-

- Publish details of all payments over £500 (see Appendix 1)
- Grants and payments under contract to voluntary community and social enterprise sector bodies
- Salaries, names (with an option for individuals to refuse to release of name) job descriptions, responsibilities, budgets and number of staff for all senior officers receiving a salary of over £58,200.
- Organisational chart of staff structure of the local authority.
- Councillor allowances and expenses.
- Copies of contracts and tenders to businesses and to the voluntary community and social enterprise sector.
- Policies, performance, audit and key indicators on the authorities' fiscal and financial position;
- Data of democratic running of the council, including the constitution, election results, committee minutes, decision making processes and records of decisions.
- Production of an inventory of the data held, with an obligation to publish it.

The Protection of Freedoms Bill is also seeking to make amendments to the Freedom of Information Act.

It gives individuals a right to request that the response to a request of information be provided in an electronic form, and wherever possible that information should be in a reusable and open format.

The proposed bill also makes it a requirement for local authorities to publish the datasets it holds (and which it owns the sole IPR), which is requested by an applicant, and make available on the web site any updated versions of that dataset unless it is not appropriate for the data set to be so published.

There has also been an increase in demand for open data from members of the public. There is an increase in expectation that data collected by public services will be provided back to citizens.

If that hasn't been forthcoming then campaigners have often created the open data sources themselves. Chris Taggart's Openly Local site has scraped elections data from council websites and published that in Linked Open Data format. Scraperwiki is a company which provides a website to support developers who repurpose data published in a form that isn't reusable into one that is.

## Opportunities

Open data also offers opportunities for the City Council to work in more efficient ways and to stimulate economic activity. As the council is looking to new models of service delivery, directorates should position themselves to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves e.g. when undergoing major service redesign and arising from major systems development.

The sharing and open access to datasets using common standards amongst public sector organisations will turn data into intelligent and smart information. This has the potential to accelerate business growth and increase entrepreneurial opportunities.

This is very much aligned to the Big Society agenda and will encourage social innovation by citizens and communities. A smart city is not measured by the amount of technology it deploys - it is a measure of how citizens, business and communities engage and utilise it to achieve their goals and objectives.

An example of an open data project which illustrates this potential is Digital Birmingham's Civic Dashboard, which is described in Appendix 2.

## 3. PRINCIPLES

Data that may be published online will fit the working definition of Public Data as described by the Data Transparency Board. It reads:

"Public Data is the objective, factual, non-personal data on which public services run and are assessed, and on which policy decisions are based, or which is collected or generated in the course of public service delivery."

This, in turn, fits the NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED classification in the classification system that all BCC assets must be classified under. NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED has the following description: "Information that is freely available/published by BCC and made available to the public. "

The principles of the Open Data Policy are:

Data will be published on the council's website where this has been made a requirement by central government in line with any timelines set out.

Additionally, individual directorates and sections are encouraged to publish Public Data online

All data will be published in formats which will allow easy reuse with csv as a default. Services will be welcome to publish data in pdf format, but this should be in addition to csv. The council will explore the publication of its data in Linked Data format (this was explained in a previous report)

All data will be issued in accordance with a UK Open Government License.

Datasets will be recorded in HM Government's register of open data at <http://data.gov.uk> and at <http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/open-data>

Where appropriate, datasets will be made available according to a schedule which will be published alongside. Additionally, dataset versions will be clearly labelled to ensure that the public can see how up to date it is.

Where data is furnished through a Freedom of Information request then consideration should be given to publishing the dataset in as wide a format as possible.

Datasets will be published using Unique Resource Indicators as unique identifiers to allow easier access across multiple systems.

Open data is a key success factor and should be included within service redesign work and major systems replacement.

Where datasets are published a clear mechanism for reporting errors by the public should be made available.

## **4. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

The City Council's website is hosted by Service Birmingham and managed by the City Council's Customer Services department. Responsibility for maintaining content lies with individual service areas and the responsibility also lies with them for the release and maintenance of Open Data.

The responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Open Data principles lies with the Performance and Information Division within the Corporate Resources Directorate.

Data made available as open data should be published on the Open Data page of the Council's web site. Data which is published on service areas' own pages should have links from the Open Data Page.

The Open Data page will contain a statement that the data is being made available under the Government Open Licence and will have no disclaimers or qualifications. Open data published on service area websites will not include any copyright or licence statements which conflict with the use of the Government Open Licence.

The Open Data page will contain advice or additional information which will help potential users of the data to understand the nature of the data, its source or validity or any other aspects of the data which might help its being reused effectively. Wherever possible and appropriate, this will include metadata.

The currency and validity of the published data sets on the Open Data page will be reviewed regularly by Performance and Information Division and any issues raised with the data custodian.

The Open Data page will contain a link to the appropriate person or council function who can deal with issues or complaints about the data which has been published.

## 5. APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 – Council Expenditure Over £500

The Communities and Local Government Secretary, Eric Pickles, called on councils to provide financial transparency by publishing spending information over £500 online by January 2011.

Birmingham published its spending information early and first made it available from August 2010. Initially, the data was only made available in Portable Document Format (pdf) which led to criticism of the council from a number of sources, including Chris Taggart who sits on the Local Public Data Panel.

Currently, the council publishes its spending data in both pdf and Comma Separated Variable (csv) formats. This complies with both the spirit of the requirement and the proposed open data policy.

The Principles stated in the Open Data Policy apply in the following ways to the spending data:

1. As a requirement is has been published on the council's website
2. –
3. The data is now being published in csv. There are no plans at the moment to explore publishing as Linked Data
4. An open license has been issued which is based upon the UK Open Government License
5. The data is registered on the city's open data page but not through <http://data.gov.uk>
6. The publishing schedule is clearly stated on the page
7. –
8. The link used to each monthly dataset is published to a persistent URL which uses the city's CRM structure
9. We do not have a clear mechanism for reporting errors in the data

From this it can be seen that the city is currently publishing its expenditure data in a manner which largely complies with the proposed Open Data Policy.

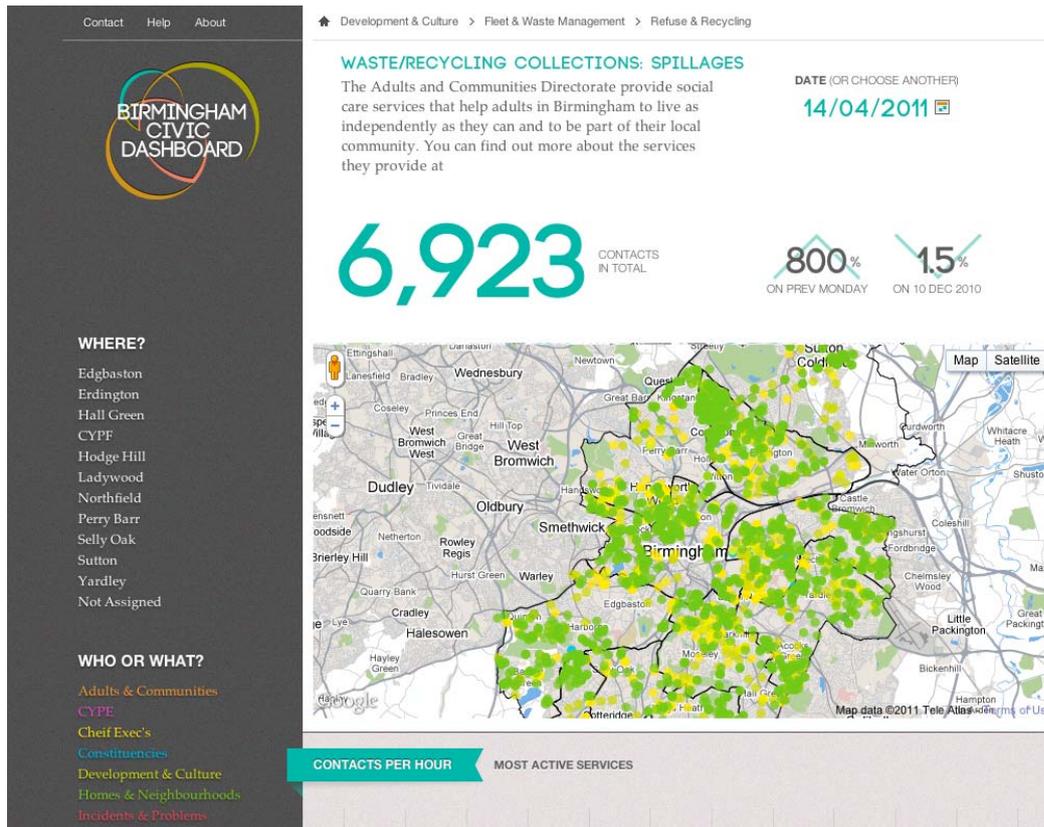
It is worth noting that in order to comply with the definition of Public Data being “objective, factual, **non-personal** data” resource has been used in order to redact personal details from the expenditure data files which have been released.

### Appendix 2 – Birmingham Civic Dashboard

Digital Birmingham, in collaboration with local digital company, Mudlark, won funding from the Nesta Make It Local programme to develop the ‘Birmingham Civic Dashboard’.

The Birmingham Civic Dashboard website allows residents to see local issues such as housing repairs, anti-social behaviour and missed waste collections that have been reported to the council on an online interactive map. Every day, the application takes live data from the city's Customer First contact database and shows trends on a map which will allow the council and residents to identify ‘hotspot’ areas where issues are common or recurring.

The Civic Dashboard relies upon Open Data, suitably anonymised so as not to identify individuals, to create this visualisation on the web. People are then encouraged to comment on the trends that they see emerge over time giving an on-the-ground perspective on particular issues.



A screenshot from the prototype of the Birmingham Civic dashboard