

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

19 JULY 2022

QUESTION NO. 1

Mr Wellum to ask the Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee:

Local Authority Transparency Code

Internal Audit for Reading Borough Council (RBC) have presented in the past audit reports to this committee identifying that the authority did not fully comply with the Local Authority Transparency Code 2015. (The Code supersedes earlier requirements to make certain data sets freely, transparently available to the public.) The RBC audit report was restricted to examining whether the authority published the specified datasets, it did not report on whether a published dataset satisfied the individual datum requirements for each and every entry.

As of the 19th July 2022 does the authority comply with all provisions of the Local Authority Transparency Code 2015?

REPLY by Councillor Williams (Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee):

I invite Councillor Terry, the Lead Councillor for Corporate Services & Resources to make the response on my behalf.

REPLY by Councillor Terry, Lead Councillor for Corporate Services & Resources:

Thank you for your question Mr Wellum.

Officers responded to the internal audit report by reviewing all sections of the Transparency pages on the council's website and the underlying procedures.

Officers also engaged with data owners across multiple council departments to ensure that data was brought up to date and would be regularly refreshed.

In addition, a policy and procedure was implemented after review by the Information Governance Board.

Some of the information, which was updated over the last year, has fallen out of currency which indicates that further work is necessary to strengthen the procedures and monitor them more closely.

There is a gap in the current data, which has been acknowledged with you, following your communication with Council officers who have written to you with regards to paragraphs 48 & 49 of the Code and the requirement to list numerous items of data for all staff earning above £50,000.

As you will know, we have published Senior Staff Salaries and Benefits on the website, however we acknowledge that further information could be provided surrounding responsibilities e.g. the services and functions they are responsible for, budget held and number of staff. The number of staff involved in this over £50k

cohort is considerable and there is no current data set which provides the totality of s49 recommended information.

This requirement affects council staff (and school staff) in RG9 and above so we are not talking about “senior managers” as we might understand them. We are talking about a large group of professionals, technical specialists and middle managers. So the requirement of the Transparency Code calls for data which does not exist in any single data set, and so we will have to review how this might be brought together.

We have commissioned our HR section to review this requirement and establish if and how this information can be collated and published in a proportionate and cost-effective way. I don't have an update at this time for the timescales for that to be completed.