

TRANSPARENCY PROGRAMME UPDATE FOR CORPORATE POLICY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(To be covered orally in the updates by the Leader and GMD)

Cabinet agreed the overall approach to the transparency agenda on 13th September and that report (attached) was called into Cabinet Scrutiny, who welcomed the programme.

Letters were sent to around 13,000 suppliers to inform them of our intention to publish invoices over £500.

On 23rd September we launched the first phase of publication to the media and our staff. As of the end of October, the information published on kent.gov.uk now includes:

- all invoices over £500, except those containing personal information;
- bubble diagrams to explain the budget breakdown;
- information about Cabinet and CMT (including role, expenses, salaries, JDs and video clips)
- core performance monitoring

The statistics on web-based views [between 23 September 2010 and 2 November 2010] are as follows:

- Council spending main page – 3,332 page views - 2,089 unique views
- Salaries and expenses page – 8,774 page views – 2,497 unique views
- What we spend page – 1,734 page views – 939 unique views
- Invoices over £500 – 485 page views 410 unique views
- Council spending news feature – 426 page views – 366 unique views
- Video Plays – 2,945

To minimise Freedom of Information enquiries, we have set-up response processes which are channelled through the Contact Centre to specific directorate contact points. To date we have received just 3 e-mail enquiries, 2 online comment forms on the presentation of the information, and around 10 phone calls which have been dealt with by the contact centre staff. The media are starting to scrutinise the invoices and ask questions about specific expenditure items so it remains to be seen how interest will continue to develop in the publications.

Work is proceeding across the authority to identify further data sets which should be published.

In relation to the publication of salary information for senior staff below CMT level, it has been decided to proceed on the basis of the new structure rather than the existing one because there will be considerable change.

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