Local Public Data Panel – Twenty-second Meeting
Open Data Institute, 65 Clifton Street, London EC2A 4JE
MINUTES AND ACTIONS - 17th October 2013

Panel: Professor Sir Nigel Shadbolt (Chairman), Baroness Stowell (DCLG), Chris Taggart (Openlylocal.com), Roger Hampson (London Borough of Redbridge), Tim Allen (Visiting Professor, Birkbeck University), Conn Crawford (Sunderland CC), Gesche Schmid (Local Government Association), Vicky Sargent (Boilerhouse), David Evans (Information Commissioner's Office), Jos Creese (Hampshire County Council), Shane O'Neill (ELGIN - Electronic Local Government Information Network), Annemarie Naylor (Head of Assets, Locality), Olivia Burman (Cabinet Office).
Other Attendees: Shehla Husain, Steve Peters, Nick Bagshaw and Anthony Karabinas (DCLG)
Apologies: Dominic Campbell (FutureGov), Nick Booth (Podnosh), Cllr Tim Cheetham (Cabinet Spokesperson for Children, Young People and Families, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council), Dennis Skinner (LGA)
Secretariat: Ashley Pottier and Padma Juggapah (DCLG).

Welcome

Professor Sir Nigel Shadbolt welcomed Baroness Stowell of Beeston MBE, newly appointed Minister at the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) with responsibility for transparency.

The Minister said that transparency was a means to an end. Action is needed to drive out better value for money and efficiency in local services and transparency puts the spotlight on how money was spent locally. More work is needed to set out the benefits of transparency which could include:

o Localism – increasing democratic accountability, empowering citizens to hold their councils to account;
o Efficiency - making local government and public services more efficient;
o Growth - empowering businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, to compete in the local economy and hence stimulate growth.

The Minister asked the Panel to help drive these principles forward by:

o Identifying areas information had not been made available and changes could be made to correct this;
o Getting people who lacked enthusiasm to understand the benefits of being more open;
o Demonstrating the benefits of transparency to external partners.

The following points were made in discussion:

o Public bodies must ensure that information is also published about services which are outsourced, not just information about the services they provide directly themselves;
o Citizens might not understand raw data - the challenge is to put it into context and improve the presentation and meaningfulness of publishing raw data - LGA could help drive this agenda forward.

Item 1: Minutes and Action Points

The Panel approved the minutes from the meeting on 25 July and discussed progress on the action points. The following points were made in discussion:

Outstanding Action from 25th July meeting: Secretariat will follow up with Cllr Tim Cheetham how we might get further views from elected Members and they areas of the panel's work where they could make the biggest contribution.
Outstanding Action from 25th July meeting: Chris Taggart to set up procurement working group (with support from Jos Creese).

Item 2: Revised Transparency Code

Ashley Pottier provided an update on the Code and advised the Panel that subject to Ministerial approval, the Government Response to the consultation it held on local transparency would be published shortly.

The following points were made in discussion:
o The land and asset element of the Code was welcomed, particularly capturing where an asset may be available for community use/ownership (Annemarie Naylor offered the Locality's help in promoting the Code);
o It was important to recognise that the Code captures information to be published at a point in time and that there is further progress to be made on transparency and developing the Code;
o Transparency was also needed for small bodies, entities and the voluntary and community sector (VCS).

Action: DCLG to share the proposed Government Response with the Panel when Ministers have commented on it (Secretariat).

Item 3: Update from the Cabinet Office
Olivia Burman provided an update on:
o <u>National Information Infrastructure (NII)</u> – this is being finalised and will comprise an inventory of key published and unpublished datasets with overarching narrative. It aims to increase the range and volume of data published in fully open formats.
 o Most of DCLG's datasets (some 800) were already published on data.gov.uk although it has identified 62 unpublished datasets, including Energy Performance (EPC) which it is considering making freely available from April 2014.
o <u>UK National Action Plan (NAP)</u> – this is a collaboration between Government and Civil Society Organisations and would be published at the Open Government Partnership Summit on 31st October. DCLG has two NAP commitments: (a) to further develop and embed Open Data Communities Programme and; (b) subject to Ministerial approval publish a revised local transparency code.
o <u>Open Government Partnership (OGP) Summit</u> – will take place on 31st October to 1st November at the QEII Centre in London. The LGA, DCLG and Local e-Government Standards Body were hosting a joint stand at the Summit to promote locally generated data, work on standards, LG Inform and service comparability across areas.

Action: Confirm whether G8 Action Plan is public (Olivia Burman).
Action: Panel members wishing to attend the Summit should inform Olivia as there is a strict accreditation process for security reasons (Panel and Olivia Burman).

Item 4: Update from the Department for Communities and Local Government
<u>Refreshing DCLG's Open Data Strategy</u> – Nick Bagshaw said that the strategy focussed on meeting Ministers' desire for DCLG to remain at the forefront of the open data agenda. The document is structured around the <u>G8 Open Data Charter</u> principles and articulates the benefits of making DCLG data open and accessible, with specific commitments for the next 12-18 months. The <u>Open Data Communities</u> programme is pivotal to the strategy's success.

Steve Peters added that the medium-term ambition was:
o To progressively release all departmental datasets via Open Data Communities.
o To extend partnerships with local authorities (LA) and the VCS, focusing on the benefits of open standards as the glue to inter-link DCLG and third-party sources over the web.

o To continue to work with leading organisations, such as the LGA and its LG Inform platform, demonstrating practical applications and the benefits of open, linked data.
o To continue the work with the Local eGovernment Standards Body to develop and embed the underpinning, enabling standards.

The Panel was positive about the document, acknowledging that DCLG was an open data exemplar mainly as a result of Steve's work.

Action: Panel members to scrutinise DCLG's Open Data Strategy and send comments to Nick Bagshaw by NOON 21st October for publication End October[1].
Action: Panel members to provide ideas on extending partnerships with LAs and the VCS to stimulate and encourage new examples of inter-linking disparate datasets over the web.

Item 5: Update from the Local Government Association
Gesche Schmid provided an update on the LGA's work:
o Open Data Breakthrough Fund – 30 applications received, 11 were successful. Half of those received focussed on projects developing and promoting standards, in partnerships with other LAs. The remainder focussed on working with the local open data community to release data. Two LAs had dropped out of the programme due to lack of capacity.
o Local Opendata infrastructure – *LG Inform* has been released to LAs and will go live end-November. The data.gov.uk local area webpage project was on hold as the data.gov.uk team is preparing for the OGP Summit and would be revisited after the OGP Summit.
o The LGA had responded to the Cabinet Office on the National Action Plan highlighting that more evidence for local demand of data was needed.

Action: LGA to do a presentation on LG Inform at the next meeting (Gesche Schmid).

Item 6: Forward Look
Roger Hampson gave an overview of the [Redbridge DataShare](#) Redbridge started to publish their data online in 2006 resulting in significant cash savings i.e. around £2m on printing costs, reduced staff costs from putting all election results online and some £800k savings from advertising all job vacancies online with web-based application processes. Redbridge currently publish some 180 datasets online and expecting to publish around 250 in the current phase. They are currently disseminating good practice to other LAs, including through the Breakthrough Fund. He added that although LAs did not feel pressured to publish data, there are issues around data protection and security issue that need further consideration.

There was a discussion on refreshing the Panel's Forward Work Programme for the year ahead. A clear work programme will help the Panel focus on priority projects and increase the ownership, commissioning and monitoring of projects.

In discussion, the following points were made:
o Encouraging data owners/business managers to associate open data/transparency with benefits was a real challenge – a project on articulating the benefits is needed;
o Need a better understanding the Public Services Network (PSN) services framework;
o Government needs to promote the "Open and Safe Guidelines" on counteracting fraud without compromising transparency;

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[1]

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254495/131031_2013_DCLG_Open_Data_Strategy.pdf

- o Open data communications should be more accessible and user-friendly for citizens e.g. maps and visual aids;
- o LeGSB's proposals for open data standards should be taken forward - the Forward Work Programme should include development of a local data eco-system to encourage understanding and engagement with open-data outside the specialist community;
- o What local authorities include in the NII should be explored by the Panel.

The Panel agreed that a sub-group of members should have further discussions and report back to the next meeting a further draft of the Forward Work Programme.

Action: David Evans/ICO to give a presentation about what they do at the next meeting.
Action: A task and finish group will pull together proposals for a work programme in time for the next meeting (Secretariat to set-up telekits for sub-group: Shehla, Chris Taggart on Procurement, Shane, Jos, Roger, Conn, David, Vicky).
Action: Work with Local Open Data Group to develop and put to the Panel, at a future meeting, proposals on the local information infrastructure (Steve Peters, Gesche Schmid).

Item 7: AOB and Close

Action: Provide feedback from Public Sector Transparency Board at next Panel meeting (Panel Chair).
Action: Proposal for a future agenda item to discuss the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) data initiatives (Tim Allen - short paper to Panel for next meeting).

DCLG Secretariat
November 2013
Date of next Panel meeting: Wednesday 18th December 2013