



Newton and Biggin Parish Council (PC) Transparency Code 2023

1. Policy context

The Local Government Transparency Code 2015 (the code) came into effect on 1 April 2015. The code is issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in exercise of powers under section 2 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, and replaces any previous codes issued in relation to authorities in England under those powers.

The code does not replace or supersede the existing framework for access to and re-use of public sector information provided by the:

- Freedom of Information Act 2000 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012)
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004
- Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005
- Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community regulations 2009
- Sections 25 and 26 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 which provides rights for persons to inspect a local authority's accounting records and supporting documentation, and to make copies of them.

Newton and Biggin Parish Council does not meet the definition of a local authority covered by the requirements of the code, defined as 'a parish council which has gross annual income or expenditure (whichever is higher) under £25,000 or exceeding £200,000' but consider a transparency code good practice.

Transparency gives local electors the tools and information they need to hold local public bodies to account and allows access to relevant information about the authority's accounts and governance.

The publication of the items in this code will provide the local electorate with a clear picture of the activities of this authority.

2. Application

Newton and Biggin Parish Council will publish the following documents regularly:

- Full and informative agendas for formal meetings no later than 3 clear days before the meeting.
- Financial reports that accompany the agenda.
- Draft minutes of formal meetings no later than 1 month after the meeting.
- All approved policies.
- A list of all Councillors and their contact details.
- Member's Interests.
- List of the council's assets - (the Asset Register).
- Comments from the annual internal audit.
- Internal Audit action plan.

All the above documents can be accessed on the Parish Council page on the Parish Council Website <http://www.newtonparishcouncil.org.uk>

3. The Annual Governance Accountably Return (AGAR)

To facilitate external audit, for each financial year as part of the Annual Governance Assurance Return (AGAR), the Council must also publish:

- Exercise of Public Rights notification
- Annual Internal Audit Report
- Annual Governance Statement (AGAR section 1)
- Annual Accounting Statement (AGAR section 2)
- Signed Statement of Accounts
- Explanation of Variances
- Bank Reconciliation
- External Auditor's Report and Certificate (AGAR section 3)
- Notice for Conclusion of Audit (from the External Auditor)

Newton and Biggin Parish Council will commit to publish this information by 1 July in the year immediately following the accounting year to which it relates. This is particularly important to enable local Government electors, council taxpayers and ratepayers to scrutinise financial information so that they can exercise their rights to question and make objections to the auditor.

All the above documents can be accessed on the Parish Council page on the Parish Council Website <http://www.newtonparishcouncil.org.uk>

4. Compliance with the Data Protection Act

The Government believes that local transparency can be implemented in a way that complies with the Data Protection Act 1998. Where local authorities are disclosing information which potentially engages the Data Protection Act 1998, they must ensure that the publication of that information is compliant with the provisions of that Act. The Data Protection Act 1998 does not restrict or inhibit information being published naming councillors, members or senior local authority officers who have taken certain decisions, because of the public interest in the scrutiny of such senior individuals and decision makers.

The Data Protection Act 1998 also does not automatically prohibit information being published naming the suppliers with whom the authority has contracts, including sole traders, because of the public interest in accountability and transparency in the spending of public money.

All elements of the transparency code will be published electronically via the Newton and Biggin Parish Council website.

The Parish Council lead for this Policy is the Chair, Ian Davis.

Approved: 27 April 2023

Chair Signature:

Minute Reference:

Review Date: April 2024