

TRANSPARENCY ARRANGEMENTS

Transparency and openness should be the fundamental principle behind everything the Council does. Greater openness and transparency provides local people with the information they need to hold the Council to account.

A plain English guide to openness and accountability issued in 2014 sets out clear guidelines on what should be available to the public in relation to our Council. In addition, a new Transparency Code for smaller authorities came into effect from 1st April 2015. Although it applies to parish councils with an annual turnover not exceeding £25k, it is considered best practice for all parish councils to follow.

This Code requires Parish Councils to publish the following

- 1) All items of expenditure above £100.
- 2) End of year accounts
- 3) Annual governance statement
- 4) Internal audit report
- 5) List of councillor or member responsibilities
- 6) Details of public land and building assets
- 7) Minutes, agenda and meeting papers of formal meetings

It is increasingly the normal way to communicate with the public online via our web site. This should be in addition to their attendance at meetings, which in practise is only attended by a few members of the public.

A quick look at the contents of the Red Lodge Parish web page displays out of date information. This indicates that prompt improvements are needed if we are to demonstrate transparency to the public, using this medium. The contents of the web pages has been discussed with the Clerk, who is fully aware of its shortcomings.

In the past, populating our web page with up to date information, has not been achieved for various reasons. The staffing situation for the Council has recently improved. It seems timely to re-visit this area, to help determine whether we can improve reporting on the web site with existing resources, or whether additional resources / training / expertise is needed so that we comply with the Transparency Code.

I would seek Members thoughts on our compliance with the Transparency Code, and if necessary, to help determine what steps are needed.

I would recommend the Clerk be tasked with identifying and reporting on any actions necessary, together with a timetable, to ensure the Parish Council comply with the Transparency Code.