

Transparency Board Minutes

21.11.13

TRANSPARENCY BOARD

Transparency Board Members:	Officials (Regular Attendees):
Francis Maude Minister for the Cabinet Office	Carol Tullo Director, Information Policy and Services, The National Archives
Lord McNally Minister of State, Justice	Paul Maltby Director, Open Data and Innovation Group, Cabinet Office
Stephan Shakespeare, YouGov	Chris Fleming Science Capability & Networks, GO-Science
Professor Sir Nigel Shadbolt, Open Data Institute	Joanna Shayer Private Secretary, MCO, Cabinet Office
Sir Mark Walport, Government Chief Scientific Advisor	Olivia Burman Transparency Team, Cabinet Office
Heather Savory, Open Data User Group	Matt Lloyd Transparency Team, Cabinet Office
Professor David Rhind, Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information	Malcolm Scott Department of Business, Innovation and Skills
Bill Roberts, SWIRRL	Kitty Von-Bertele Transparency Team, Cabinet Office
Steve Thomas, Experian	Sue Bateman Transparency Team, Cabinet Office
Andrew Stott	Nicola Calderhead Ministry of Justice
	Sam Roberts Transparency Team, Cabinet Office
	Paul Driver Department of Business, Innovation and Skills

Officials (Presenting):	
Peter Lawrence Deputy Director, Transparency Team, Cabinet Office	
Simon James Deputy Director, Information Rights and Devolution, Ministry of Justice	

Apologies:	
Prof Sir Tim Berners-Lee Open Data Institute	Mike Bracken, Government Digital Service
Dr Rufus Pollock Open Knowledge Foundation	Liam Maxwell Government Digital Service
Matthew Hancock Minister for Skills	Fiona Caldicott Caldicott Review

Introductions

The Chair (Minister for the Cabinet Office) welcomed all attendees including Stephan Shakespeare, Bill Roberts, Steve Thomas and David Rhind to the Board (Bill, Stephan and David were unable to make the last meeting).

OGP Summit – Reflections and next steps

Minister for the Cabinet Office presented on the outcomes and successes of the recent OGP summit. He made the following remarks:

1. The event was an outstanding success.
2. He was grateful to the Cabinet Office Transparency Team for their work in organising the event and securing strong, meaningful commitments for the UK Government.

Observations and objectives set by board:

3. The challenge now was to capitalise on the position the UK had established on the international stage.
4. The UK has continued to focus on hardwiring transparency into the international system and has demonstrated the role of the OGP to achieve tangible commitments.
5. The UK National Action Plan was well-received and our headline commitment, on beneficial ownership, was the subject of significant media coverage.
6. We must align our domestic and international agendas to ensure the UK maintains its world leading position and that we use our experience to enhance other countries' capacity to achieve their commitments.

CO Transparency Team – Forward Look

Pete Lawrence of the Cabinet Office Transparency Team presented on the Team's priorities between December 2013 and August 2014. He set out the following:

1. The Team will, in future, be led by Oliver Buckley who was previously Deputy Director for the International Team. Pete Lawrence would be moving on. The team will be structured into the following sub-groups:
 - a. Data.gov.uk
 - b. Wider audience & secretariat
 - c. Departmental Relationship Management
 - d. Policy, National Action Plan and corporate
 - e. International team
2. The Team's objectives are divided into the following three high level areas:
 - a. Get quality open data out of government and into the public's hands.
 - b. Bring the power of open data to a wider audience.
 - c. Maintain Britain's global position as a leader on open data and transparency.

Detail:

Get quality open data out of government and into the public's hands

- a. Work with departments to prioritise open data releases
 - i. Progress the commitments in the NII narrative.
 - ii. Work with departments to release more government data, making use of the feedback process on data.gov.uk. Use the Public Sector Transparency Board to challenge departments as appropriate.
- b. Maintain data.gov.uk as the world's leading government data portal:
 - i. Incorporate location (map based) search for all files on data.gov.uk.
 - ii. Develop a vocabulary registry for local authorities and with the Local Government Association work to make data.gov.uk the publishing platform for local authority data (already in progress).
 - iii. Increase awareness of how to use open data via data.gov.uk, for example through instructional videos and beginners guides.
 - iv. Continue to improve data.gov.uk To Go.
 - v. Work with GDS to automate publication of files from GOV.UK to data.gov.uk (one process).

- vi. Continue our direct participation in the government open standards board.
- vii. Activate the visualisation functionality of the current data previewer in data.gov.uk.
- viii. Work internationally to influence and achieve a standard metadata profile to be used for open data.
- c. Influence policies to enable the appropriate release of data:
 - i. Ensure delivery of key milestones in the OGP UK National Action Plan
 - ii. Consider how to embed the move to 'open by default', including:
 - Adoption of EU Public Sector Information Directive into UK law.
 - Freeing additional sources of new open data from public sector contracts and procurement, and in grants to charities.

Bring the power of open data to a wider audience

- a. Top priorities are to:
 - i. Work with local authorities to create 'open data local authorities', unleashing a flow of new local authority data, facilitating the creation of locally relevant products.
 - ii. Work with the Open Data User Group, the Open Data Institute, the Open Knowledge Foundation and the Advisory Panel on Public Sector Information to build relationships with business open data users and understand and incorporate their demands in our open data release strategies and NII.
 - iii. Establish a consistent, credible and strong media narrative: tracking and grouping new case studies, stories and blogs and building the case for open data and its use throughout government and society.
- b. Secondary Priorities are as follows:
 - i. Use Cabinet Office convening power to encourage others to create salient applications.
 - ii. Encourage the creation of more average-user-focussed guides to the use of open data.
 - iii. Links with wider open data communities.
 - iv. Help the Civil Service make more from open data.

Maintain Britain's global position as a leader on open data and transparency

- a. Continue to play a role in setting the future direction of the OGP
 - i. Maintain pressure on target countries to join OGP
 - ii. Support and improve IRM process and support Open Data Working Group
- b. Champion open data during the Russian Presidency of the G8
 - i. Continue support for the G8 on reporting progress (both domestically and internationally).
 - ii. Seek to extend Open Data Charter to wider audiences
- c. Maintain and build strong strategic partnerships with key countries, multilaterals and other international allies.

Observations and objectives set by board:

1. There are still a significant number of broken links on data.gov.uk which need addressing as a priority.
2. Data requests need to be managed effectively and the most complex or contentious cases should result in departments being brought before the Transparency Board.
3. The data on data.gov.uk is equally important within government as it is to external users. There is still great need for better use and sharing of data within and between departments. Systematic mechanisms for the use of data within government should be developed in tandem with the open data agenda going forward.

4. The first iteration of the National Information Infrastructure is a great first step. An expert group should be convened to consult on how it should be developed and grown in line with the needs of the open data user community.
5. The NII should be informed by the open data community and have ambition. It should not necessarily be driven by what data is currently available.
6. There is a need to ensure that the timetable and quality of data releases is visible and predictable.
7. There is a need for a coherent approach to the quality, description and metadata on data.gov.uk. This is linked to the GDS and G8 work currently being undertaken in the area of data standards.
8. It is positive that departments are beginning to see the release of data as a “matter of course”.

Focus on SMEs and Larger Business

Stephan Shakespeare, Bill Roberts and Steve Thomas gave their perspectives on the use of government data in business.

1. Stephan Shakespeare made the following points:
 - a. Private sector companies haven't yet used open data as effectively as they could. There are opportunities for it to be exploited and for it to add real value to businesses. Businesses should be challenged.
 - b. An example of a group looking at the opportunities that open data presents is the Demographic User Group (DUG), a consortium of major businesses from a wide range of sectors, who look at ways of using data to improve their business practices. .
 - c. He noted that communicating the power of open data and stimulating demand is partly the job of the ODI, however, he proposed that a Transparency Board subgroup should be set up with the express purpose of challenging and engaging big business.
2. Bill Roberts made the following points:
 - a. The volume of data released through data.gov.uk is a good start, but the value of open data is only realised when it is used. Therefore it is important to try to measure how datasets on data.gov.uk are used and to target further developments in data.gov.uk towards increasing the effective use of the data. This is not an easy task but it should be explored.
 - b. There is a need for businesses to invest in order to exploit open data for their business needs. This means that government needs to commit to guarantee the availability and quality of datasets, so that businesses can be confident in returns on their investments.
 - c. He stated that the ODI's Open Data Certificates are very useful in testing whether a dataset release provides the information needed for a business to decide whether to invest in using the data.
 - d. There are also technical considerations on how data is published that effect its usefulness to business: for example, API access as well as downloads, use of standard identifiers and vocabularies.
 - e. He stated that we need to understand how people use government data and go the extra mile in ensuring that business's technical requirements are taken into account in data releases.
3. Steve Thomas made the following points:
 - a. He stated that the government's efforts in the first few years of its implementation of the transparency and open data agenda were excellent and congratulated the Cabinet Office Transparency Team on their achievements.

- b. The value of government data is high but there is greater value in open data about 'people' rather than about 'things'.
- c. He posited that consumer attitudes to the use of their data are changing. He gave examples of cases in which consumers would exchange the right to share access to their personal data with companies for access to products and services.
- d. The area of data sharing between government and business and methods of gaining citizens consent should be explored.

Observations and objectives set by board:

1. In order to ensure that government data is used effectively within the private sector, it may be necessary to provide a catalyst.
2. Personal Data needs to continue to be managed with the utmost care with respect to privacy and standards of anonymity.
3. Promotion of innovation is a key challenge. The ODI is going some way to meeting this challenge in supporting developers and start up companies but the needs of big business are very different to those of small to medium sized enterprises.
4. It was noted that one possible source that could aid the stimulation of innovation in the use of government data would be BIS's Connected Digital Economy Catapult which helps drive innovation and the adoption of new technologies by UK businesses.
5. The possibility of exploring data sharing with business was raised.
6. Having a clear and sustainable plan of data releases will help businesses to invest in open data.
7. The question of whether useful cuts of anonymised data could be released was raised.
8. An example was raised that the banking sector shares information on financial services – this is beneficial, however we must be wary of the privacy argument.
9. There needs to be an informed public debate on value exchange with consumers – i.e. personal data exchanged for better public services.
10. Paul Maltby made the following points:
 - a) There needs to be a clear and sustainable plan for open data.
 - b) As government, we need to catalyse innovation – e.g. through the TSB and the ODI.
11. The Chair made the following points:
 - a. Pressure needs to be put on departments to ensure that the data released is of a sufficiently high quality.
 - b. Privacy is a very sensitive issue, however, it should not be used a pretext for blocking release of data when there is little or no risk.
 - c. Open data is the new raw material; innovation is down to the private sector and outcomes of innovation will be mixed. Government can play a role in catalysing innovation.

Actions:

1. It was agreed that a sub-group would be convened to look at catalysing engagement and measuring the impact of open data in big business. This group will include representatives from big business, the Open Data Institute and the Connected Digital Economy Catapult.

Update on Data Protection Regulation

Simon James updated the board on the state of UK negotiations around EU data protection regulation. He made the following points:

1. A number of individual meetings were held with members, and everyone who wanted to participate was able to contribute.
2. During the consultation, Transparency Board members raised a number of legitimate concerns about the regulation; a majority of these were known to the negotiating team and are being accounted for in current negotiating positions.
3. The following concerns have been raised about the implications of the regulation:
 - a. It may block censuses being carried out in future due to limitations on collecting data about individuals.
 - b. The public sector may not be able to rely on 'legitimate interests' grounds for processing personal information in certain contexts.
 - c. There are concerns that the interests of the open data agenda are being neglected in the negotiation of this legislation.
4. The test employed throughout the UK's negotiations regarding the regulation is whether it will provide a higher bar for legitimate processing than existing legislation. It is felt that, as far as the text in front of the Council was concerned, this was not currently the case.
5. Broader points were raised about the regulation failing to grapple with the benefits of open data, and misunderstanding the risks associated with this type of data.

Observations and objectives set by board:

1. Concerns have been raised amongst those engaged in medical research (and the research community more broadly) that the sharing of data between institutions may be hampered by the legislation. This was in reaction to the European Parliament LIBE text rather than the regulation being worked on within the council. This was a real concern and one that could not be ignored. It would need to be a real focus of lobbying efforts in the run-up to Trialogue.
2. There have been concerns raised throughout Europe but the UK has been the most active in their attempts to reduce the potentially burdensome impact of the regulation.

Any Other Business

Open Data User Group Funding Proposal: Local Government Voucher Scheme

Heather Savory presented a proposal to use funding from the Transparency Board to work with local government to publish data. She made the following points:

1. The proposal was to make £700,000 available to local authorities throughout the UK to enable the release of data within the following areas:
 - a. Planning

- b. Gritting of roads
 - c. Public Toilets
2. The money would enable local authorities to release the data as linked data with common schemas. There is a desire to engage with the open data agenda in local authorities but funding is needed to aid this.
 3. The Open Data User Group would work with the Local Government Association to assure that funds were used appropriately and work was completed to required standards.

Observations and objectives set by board:

1. It was noted that there could be some value in approaching the issue by geographical region rather than working with all local authorities at the same time.
2. It would be necessary to work closely with the Local Public Data Panel. (Note: ODUG will take the proposal to the next Local Public Data Panel)
3. It was emphasised that the funds should be used to build capacity in local government rather than simply paying for the production of the data.
4. The Chair concluded:
 - a. We should examine whether the fund could be used to develop a pool of expertise and focus on training. This would generate capabilities in this area in local government.

Actions:

1. Heather Savory was tasked with working with the transparency team to think through the nature of support given to local government, and examining whether funds could be used more effectively to provide training and build capacity.

Open Data User Group – HMLR INSPIRE Open Data.

Heather Savory asked the board to note that ODUG has been supporting a small data business who is trying to make use of the HMLR INSPIRE Data which, although released as Open Data by HMLR, has become subject to Ordnance Survey (OS) Derived Data licensing restrictions. She noted that progress was being made toward agreeing a license fee which was considerably lower than that initially proposed by OS; this would set the price level for all future users of the same data.

Close

The Chair thanked the Board for their contributions and closed the meeting. He also took the opportunity to thank Pete Lawrence for his outstanding work on the transparency agenda over the past three years. The Chair wished him good luck in his next post.

The next meeting will take place in January 2014.