

# The Transparency fund for Smaller Local Councils - Frequently asked questions

2016-17

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## **1. What is the Transparency code for Smaller Authorities?**

This code is issued to meet the government's desire to place more power into citizens' hands to increase democratic accountability.

The code is mandatory from 1 April 2015 and requires the online publication of key spending and governance information on the occasions specified in the Code, including information concerning joint committees. A full copy of the legislation can be found [here](#).

## **2. What about Joint Committees or Joint Burial Boards?**

From 2015 neither Joint Committees nor Joint Burial Boards will be required to submit accounts. This will be done through their constituent authorities. To be compliant with the Transparency Code, such an authority will also need to publish information on any Joint Committees or Joint Burial Boards for which they have responsibility.

## **3. Which authorities can apply for this funding?**

It applies to the following types of authorities with an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000:

- parish councils
- internal drainage boards
- charter trustees
- port health authorities

## **4. What is the role of County Associations (CALCs) and the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA)?**

CALCs and ADA are taking the lead in communicating the fund to parish councils and internal drainage boards, and in coordinating, triaging, and sending the applications through to NALC. When applications are agreed, the CALCs and ADA are then sending the money directly to the successful applicant.

## 5. What if my authority is not a member of a CALC or ADA?

DCLG have asked NALC to administer the fund through the CALCs and the ADA for all eligible authorities regardless of membership and all applications will be treated equally.

## 6. Funding Timeline

NALC is administering the Transparency Fund over three years (2015-18) to assist smaller authorities with complying with the Transparency Code.

The key action dates for the 2016/17 financial year are as follows:

Key Action Dates			
Payment Period		Cut off for CALCs and ADA to send applications to NALC	NALC to release funds for approved bids to CALCs / ADA
2016	May	16-May	27-May
	June	13-Jun	24-Jun
	July	18-Jul	29-Jul
	August	15-Aug	26-Aug
	September	19-Sep	30-Sep
	October	17-Oct	28-Oct
	November	14-Nov	25-Nov
	December	15-Dec	06-Jan
2017	January	16-Jan	27-Jan
	February	13-Feb	24-Feb
	March	20-Mar	31-Mar
Please allow 3 working days for funds to arrive in your bank account			
Please note that dates are subject to change.			
Applications will be accepted subject to funding availability.			

**7. What does “Turnover” mean?**

Turnover is defined as the higher of an authority’s gross income for the year and its gross expenditure for the year.

**8. What happens if the Parish Council Turnover is around the £25k per annum mark?**

In most circumstances a budget will have been set and it is best to work on that basis.

However this is a complex area and if you have need clarification please address questions via your CALC or ADA.

**9. Can the Parish Council publish the salary information of Clerks? How does the Transparency Code requirement sit with the Data Protection Act in this case?**

The Government believes that the personal information of local authority officials can be published compliantly with the Data Protection Act 1998. Parish Clerks, as public employees, should expect that personal information such as salary information may be made public and there is public interest in the accountability of the spending of public money. However, parish councils are best placed to apply the law to their own position, which may vary, and it is important that they carefully consider the requirements of the Data Protection Act and that any personal information is processed in a compliant manner to ensure the parish council is not in breach of the Data Protection Act. Advice can be found at <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/> .

**10. What is a scanner?**

A scanner is a device that scans documents and converts them into digital data. It can be used to produce a digital version of documents that are only available in paper form – for example the council’s end of year return.

**11. Can printers be purchased with Transparency Fund money?**

No – the cost of printers cannot be covered by the Transparency Fund.

**12. The council owns a computer but it is old, can a new one be purchased?**

If the computer is so old that it cannot upload documents to a website then yes. However, if it is capable of doing so then the fund cannot provide an upgraded machine.

**13. Should councils add VAT to the figure they are claiming?**

No – all costs quoted in the application should be net of VAT.

**14. What period can councils claim the monthly costs for?**

The monthly costs can be claimed from when the website becomes live. So a council whose site goes live in October 2015 can claim six months costs in this funding period.

**15. Who do I email forms to?**

Please mail forms to your CALC – Please keep the forms in Excel format.

**16. What happens in the 2017/18 financial year?**

It is planned that the fund will be available for the years 15/16, 16/17 and 17/18. The availability of 17/18 funding will be confirmed by DCLG in 2017.

**17. I already received funding from the Transparency Fund. May I submit another claim for costs not addressed by my previous application?**

Yes – we understand that authorities may incur costs not previously foreseen. Therefore, multiple applications are allowed.

Nevertheless, all applications will be cross-referenced for duplicate claims. For example, if you submitted a claim to cover the costs for a computer, but not the costs of a website, you may submit a new claim to cover the costs of a website. Or, your

authority has claimed the costs for staffing as a result of complying with the transparency Code for the 2015/16 period. It may now submit a claim to cover the staffing costs incurred as a result of complying with the Transparency Code for the 2016/17 period.

However, if your authority submits a duplicate claim – asking for funding to cover the cost of a computer or the cost of staffing for the same period twice, this will be considered as fraudulent behaviour and will be dealt with accordingly.

**18. Although I started making the necessary arrangements to comply with the Transparency Code during the previous financial year, I did not submit a claim to the Transparency Fund. Can I still have my costs reimbursed?**

Yes – the Transparency Fund has been set up to deal with any extra burden incurred by smaller authorities as a result of the changes in legislation.

Therefore, you may submit an application for funding to cover costs incurred as a result of the changes in legislation, at any date after the Transparency Code was implemented, on 1 April 2015.

**19. What if my question is not answered in the list?**

Please contact your local CALC. They will answer your query or refer it to NALC. This list will be updated twice a week as new queries come in.