

## **Publication of the Local Authority's Spending of Over £500.00**

### **Report by Director Resources**

#### **1 Purpose of Report**

This report is presented to update the Council on the request for publication online of the local authority's spending of over £500.00.

#### **2 Background**

##### **2.1 Council Motion**

At its meeting on 18 December, 2018 the Council considered and agreed the following motion.

*Midlothian Council recognises the importance of transparency and accountability. The Council applauds Local Government in England which has allowed scrutiny of local authority spending by publishing all spending of over £500 online, detailing both the supplier used and the reason for the spending. Council agrees that Midlothian should investigate adopting this approach whereby all payments to suppliers over £500 are published online. This will allow more effective public scrutiny of spending and help avoid waste.*

**2.2** English local authorities are required to publish expenditure via the Local Government Transparency Code 2015. The Local Government (Transparency Requirements) (England) Regulations 2015 regulates the Code. Councils in England are publishing the data either on a monthly or quarterly basis. There is no comparable requirement in Scotland.

**2.3** A subsequent report to Council on 26 March, 2019 advised elected members that relevant officers had reviewed the prospects of implementing the decision and Council agreed to progress any possible publication through existing systems to minimise cost implications.

#### **3 Purchasing Publication**

**3.1** The Purchase Ledger has been used to implement publication of all payments over £500.00 as this includes Purchase Cards.

**3.2** However, in publishing transactions for values greater than £500 to external suppliers or spend incurred in providing services, personal identifier information is not disclosed for GDPR Data Protection reasons. Consequently, it does not include:

- payments made to staff
- sensitive personal information, such as individual foster carer payments
- any payments which may reveal details about an individual
- internal charges between different parts of the Council

## **4 Report Implications**

### **4.1 Resource**

In progressing these actions to increasing openness and transparency they are being utilised within existing resources.

### **4.2 Risk**

In order to minimise risk relating to personal information we apply Section 38 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) exemptions in any publication.

As part of our commitment to increase openness and transparency we review published payments made to individuals or sole traders, so that we are reducing risk and remove the supplier names to comply with GDPR, replacing with 'Redacted – Personal Data' from a software solution.

### **4.3 Policy**

#### **Strategy**

The promotion of the concept of transparency and accountability is in accordance with the Council's aims. This will help effective engagement and democratic accountability as local people and service users engage in consultation about what services they would like provided and how they would like them delivered.

#### **Consultation**

In publishing the local authority's available information of spending of over £500.00 the move will give local people the information they need to ask questions of how the council is managing the services they provide and their interest in how the Council manages the assets they hold. No specific consultation has taken place.

#### **Equalities**

There are no equalities issue or people impact

#### **Sustainability**

No sustainability issues

## **5 Recommendations**

Council is recommended to note the publication online of the local authority's spending of over £500.00 has been implemented.

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**Report Contact:**

Kevin Anderson      Tel No 0131 271 3102

[kevin.anderson@midlothian.gov.uk](mailto:kevin.anderson@midlothian.gov.uk)