STIRLING COUNCIL Open Data Policy
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Introduction

Stirling Council aspires to be as open as possible with its citizens. This fundamental objective goes beyond our legal responsibilities. It takes us towards a culture where we share data held by the Council in a way that allows our citizens to discover, compare and interact with it.

Open Data is a way of achieving this. By working from the principles in this policy we will establish a new openness with our citizens, encourage improvement in our services and the building blocks for innovation to make life better for all.

Background

According to the 2013 G8 Open Data Charter published by the UK Cabinet Office,[1] the world is witnessing the growth of a global movement that contains enormous potential to create more accountable, efficient, responsive, and effective governments and businesses and to spur economic growth with open data at its heart.

Access to this data allows individuals and organisations to develop new insights and innovations that can improve the lives of others.

Today, people expect to be able to access information and services electronically when and how they want. Increasingly, this is true of government data as well. This can be used to generate insights, ideas, and services and increase transparency about what governments and businesses are doing.

And yet, while governments and businesses collect a wide range of data, they do not always take the opportunity to share these data in ways that are easily discoverable, useable, or understandable by the public.

Open Data promotes accountability and good governance, enhances public debate and helps to combat corruption by;

- showing how and where public money is spent, providing strong incentives for that money to be used most effectively;

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-data-charter

- enabling people to make better informed choices about the services they receive and the standards they should expect.

Freely-available government data can be used in innovative ways as a catalyst for innovation in the private sector, supporting the creation of new markets, businesses, and jobs. These benefits can multiply as more businesses adopt open data practices modelled by government and share their own data with the public.

A report by the European Commission estimates that overall economic gains from opening up this resource could amount to €40 billion a year in the EU. Opening up public data will also foster the participation of citizens in political and social life and contribute to policy areas such as the environment.

The 2009 Digital Britain Report described data as 'an innovation currency' and 'the lifeblood of the knowledge economy'[2]. An Open Data policy will contribute to the delivery of several of Stirling Council's Strategic Priorities most notably our commitment to:

- Pursue a diverse high wage economy that delivers local jobs for people across Stirling
- Regenerate our most in need communities to deliver a full range of positive social, environmental and economic outcomes.
- Examining and delivering on more opportunities for improved models of service delivery.

The Scottish Government published an Open Data Strategy for Scotland in February 2015 which establishes targets for the publication of data by public authorities in Scotland[3]. The Scottish Government Data Management Board has established 10 guiding principles that will deliver their vision for Scotland. Two of these are particularly relevant in the context of open data:

- **Availability:** Make public service data (historic and current) available and readily discoverable, in formats which are easily re-used (e.g. machine readable). This will allow and encourage others to make re-use of the data to develop new products and services. In turn, this will create wealth and jobs, as well as better services for people in Scotland

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[2] http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm76/7650/7650.pdf
[3] http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Economy/digital/digitalservices/datamanagement/datainnovation/OpenData Strategy

- **Innovation**: Support effective and timely research that brings different data sets together easily and with minimal bureaucracy. This will enable more responsive service development, contribute to Scotland's reputation for research and development, attract business and make Scotland the "come to place" for innovation in data science and analysis.[4]

Building upon the ambitions expressed at national and international levels we therefore agree to follow a set of **principles** that will be the foundation for access to, and the release and re-use of, data made available by STIRLING COUNCIL.

They are:

1. Open Data by Default
2. Quality and Quantity
3. Useable by All
4. Releasing Data for Improved Governance
5. Releasing Data for Innovation

Principle 1: Open Data by Default

We recognise that free access to, and subsequent re-use of, open data are of significant value to society and the economy.

We agree to orient our Council towards open data by default.

We recognise that there is national and international legislation, in particular pertaining to intellectual property, personally-identifiable and sensitive information, which must be observed.

We will:

- **Establish an expectation that all Stirling Council data be published openly by default**, as outlined in this policy, while recognising that there are legitimate reasons why some data cannot be released.
- **Prepare and publish a plan for the publication of data.** As a starting point, Stirling Council will publish data in line with statutory requirements to make data available – for example:

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[4] http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Economy/digital/digitalservices/datamanagement/dmbvfs/dmbvfspdf

- ➤ **The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002** places a legal obligation on Scottish public authorities to publish the classes of information that they make routinely available, and tell the public how to access the information they publish and whether information is available free of charge or on payment.[5] The Scottish Information Commissioner's Model Publication Scheme sets out classes of information which authorities are expected to publish. [6]
- ➤ **The Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004** require the active and systematic dissemination of environmental information.[7]
- ➤ **The INSPIRE (Scotland) Regulations 2009** require certain information relating to spatial data to be made available.[8]
- ➤ **The Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015** require public sector bodies make data available for re-use, and to publish an "information asset list" detailing what data is available.[9]

- • **We will establish guidelines** on the publication of data which explain why certain confidential or legally restricted data cannot be made available. For example, data may be exempt from disclosure under FOI legislation, subject to copyright restrictions, or constitute personal data which, if disclosed, would breach Data Protection principles.

Principle 2: Quality and Quantity

We recognise that governments and the public sector hold vast amounts of information that may be of interest to citizens.

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[5] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2002/13/section/23

[6] http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/PublicationSchemes/PublicationSchemes Home.aspx

[7] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2004/520/regulation/4/made

[8] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2009/440/contents/made

[9] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/1415/pdfs/uksi_20151415_en.pdf

We also recognise that it may take time to prepare high-quality data and will therefore seek to achieve the optimal balance between timeliness, quality and usability. We propose to adopt the 5 star deployment scheme for open data with an ambition to reach 3 star level within one year of publication of this policy and 4 star within 2.

We will:
- **release high-quality open data that are timely, comprehensive, and accurate.** To the extent possible, data will be in their original, unmodified form and at the finest level of granularity (level of detail) available;
- **ensure that information in the data is written in plain, clear language,** so that it can be understood by all.
- **make sure that data are fully described**, so that consumers have sufficient information to understand their strengths, weaknesses, analytical limitations, and security requirements, as well as how to process the data; and
- **release data as early as possible**, to allow users to provide feedback, and then continue to make revisions to ensure the highest standards of open data quality are met.

Principle 3: Usable by All

We agree to release data in a way that helps all people to obtain and re-use it.

We recognise that open data should be available free of charge in order to encourage their most widespread use.

Open Data should be released without bureaucratic or administrative barriers, such as registration requirements, which can deter people from accessing the data.

Open Data will generally be published under the current version of the Open Government Licence[10] which for example, allows free use and reuse of the material for any purpose including commercial exploitation, but applies some conditions including acknowledging the source and avoiding misrepresentation. It also makes it clear that the information is provided "as is", without any liability for errors or omissions and without any guarantee of continuing availability.

We will:
- **release data in open formats wherever possible**, ensuring that the data are available to the widest range of users for the widest range of purposes; and

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[10] http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence

- **release as much data as possible**, and where it is not possible to offer free access at present, promote the benefits and encourage the allowance of free access to data. In many cases this will include providing data in multiple formats, so that they can be processed by computers and understood by people.

Principle 4: Releasing Data for Improved Governance

We recognise that the release of open data strengthens our democratic institutions and encourages better policy-making to meets the needs of our citizens.

We also recognise that interest in open data is growing in other multilateral organisations and initiatives.

We will:
- **share technical expertise and experience** with each other so that everyone can reap the benefits of open data; and
- **be transparent about our own data collection, standards, and publishing processes**, by documenting all of these related processes online.

Principle 5: Releasing Data for Innovation

Recognising the importance of diversity in stimulating creativity and innovation, we agree that the more people and organisations that use our data, the greater the social and economic benefits that will be generated. This is true for both commercial and non-commercial uses.

We will:
- **work to increase open data literacy and encourage people,** such as developers of applications and partner organisations that work in the field of open data promotion, to unlock the value of open data;

Support for Change

A key factor that affects uptake of benefits of this approach is the lack of awareness among public organisations of the potential of open data. There is still a widespread fear of losing control. Some of the concerns are legitimate, such as privacy protection, national security and the need to protect the intellectual property rights of third parties. These cannot be used as excuses for inaction. Changing this mindset requires strong political and executive commitment at the highest level within Stirling Council and across our partner organisations. The Stirling Council Open Data Policy will serve as a catalyst for action to establish and sustain a new openness with our citizens and partners.