### Freedom of Information

Volume 12, Issue 5 May / June 2016

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# Public sector contracts to be visible for first time

The Cabinet Office has announced that the UK will be the first G7 country to commit to the 'Open Contracting Data Standard' for contracts administered by central purchasing authority, the Crown Commercial Service.

The Standard, which was built in 2014 by the Web Foundation, aims to fight corruption, improve service delivery, and enhance market efficiency by enabling public contract data to be easily accessed and compared across countries.

The change, expected to happen in October 2016, will mean that the whole process of awarding public sector contracts from bidding onwards will be visible to the public for the first time. This is likely to impact public authorities relying on section 43 (commercial interests exemption) FOIA to protect relevant contracts from disclosure.

The announcement was made within the UK Open Government National Action Plan 2016 -18 which was published on the same day as the anti-corruption summit,

which London hosted on 12th May 2016.

In addition to the change regarding commercial contracts, the Plan confirms the government's intention — announced in the Independent Commission report into FOI — to revise the section 45 Code of Practice.

The Plan states that the government aims to consult on and issue a new Code by the end of 2016.

The Plan also unveils

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## Local government Transparency Code being revisited

The Department for Communities and Local Government is consulting on strengthening the Local Government Transparency Code 2015.

The Code, which was issued in February 2015, sets out the minimum data that local authorities should be publishing, the frequency with which information should be published and how it should be published.

Among the proposals are one for more extensive publication on the government's electronic Property Information Management System of information held by local authorities about land and property assets.

The proposals also require existing procurement publication to be in particular forms, plus the disclosure of the costs of 'in-house' services con-

tracts above £500k, greater detail about parking charges as well as statistics about the enforcement of parking restrictions, and mandating publication through a single landing page. The consultation closes on 8th July 2016.

A copy of the consultation document is available at <a href="https://www.pdpjournals.com/docs/88545">www.pdpjournals.com/docs/88545</a>