

Woking Borough Council

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Publication Scheme

1.0 Freedom of Information Act 2000

- 1.1 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities, sets out exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities. A “public authority” is defined in the Act, and includes but is not restricted to central and local government, non-departmental public bodies, the police, the National Health Service and schools, colleges and universities. Any person who makes a request for information to a council must be informed whether the council holds that information and, subject to exemptions, be supplied with that information.
- 1.2 Individuals also have the right of access to information about themselves under the Data Protection Act 1998. As far as public authorities are concerned, the Freedom of Information Act has extended this right to allow public access to all types of information held.
- 1.3 Every public authority is also required to adopt and maintain a Publication Scheme setting out the classes of information it holds, the manner in which it intends to publish the information, and whether a charge will be made for the information. The purpose of a Publication Scheme is to ensure that a significant amount of information is available without the need for a specific request. Publication Schemes are intended to encourage organisations to publish more information proactively and to develop a greater culture of openness.
- 1.4 The Information Commissioner has prepared and approved a model Publication Scheme. This may be adopted without modification by any public authority without further approval, and is valid until further notice. The model Publication Scheme commits an authority to make information available to the public as part of its normal business activities. The information covered is included in the classes of information mentioned below, where this information is held by the authority. Additional assistance is provided to the definition of these classes in sector specific guidance manuals issued by the Information Commissioner.
- 1.5 The Publication Scheme commits an authority:
 - To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information, including environmental information, which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.
 - To specify the information which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.
 - To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line with the statements contained within this scheme.

- To produce and publish methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public.
- To review and update on a regular basis the information the authority makes available under the scheme.
- To produce a schedule of fees charged for information which is made proactively available.
- To make this publication scheme available to the public.

1.6 The Council has adopted the following model Publication Scheme with effect from 1 January 2009.

2.0 Classes of Information

2.1 Who we are and what we do.

Organisational information, locations and contacts, constitutional and legal governance.

2.2 What we spend and how we spend it.

Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts.

2.3 What our priorities are and how we are doing.

Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.

2.4 How we make decisions.

Policy proposals and decisions. Decision making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultations.

2.5 Our policies and procedures.

Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.

2.6 Lists and Registers.

Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the authority.

2.7 The services we offer.

Advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets, transactions and media releases. A description of the services offered.

2.8 The classes of information will not generally include:

- Information the disclosure of which is prevented by law, or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act, or is otherwise properly to be protected from disclosure.
- Information in draft form.
- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage, or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

3.0 The method by which information published under this Scheme will be made available

- 3.1 Where it is practicable, the Council will make the information covered by this Publication Scheme available on its website (www.woking.gov.uk). Where it is impracticable to make information available on the website, or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the website, information can be obtained by contacting the Council at the following address:

Customer Services,
Woking Borough Council,
Civic Offices,
Gloucester Square,
Woking,
Surrey,
GU21 6YL

Tel. 01483 755855

Email: customers@woking.gov.uk

- 3.2 In exceptional circumstances some information may be available only by viewing in person. Where this manner is specified, contact details will be provided. An appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.
- 3.3 Information will be provided in the language in which it is held or in such other language that is legally required. Where the Council is legally required to translate any information, it will do so.
- 3.4 Obligations under disability and discrimination legislation and any other legislation to provide information in other forms and formats will be adhered to when providing information in accordance with this Scheme.

4.0 Charges which may be made for information published under this Scheme

- 4.1 The purpose of this Publication Scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by the Council for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.
- 4.2 Material which is published and accessed on the Council's website will be provided free of charge.
- 4.3 Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by Parliament.
- 4.4 Charges may be made for actual disbursements incurred such as:
- Photocopying
 - Postage and packaging
 - The costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information

4.5 Charges may also be made for information provided under this Publication Scheme where they are legally authorised, they are in all the circumstances, including the general principles of the right of access to information held by public authorities, justified and are in accordance with a published schedule or schedules of fees which is readily available to the public.

4.6 If a charge is to be made, confirmation of the payment due will be given before the information is provided. Payment will be requested prior to provision of the information.

5.0 Written requests

5.1 Information held by the Council that is not published under this Publication Scheme can be requested in writing, when its provision will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

6.0 Further Assistance

6.1 General queries or comments on this Publication Scheme can be made to Peter Bryant, Head of Legal Services:
Tel. 01483 743030
Email. peter.bryant@woking.gov.uk

Date: 4 December 2008