

DRAFT NOTE

PUBLICATION SCHEME

Background - The Freedom of Information Act 2000

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("The Act") gives a general right of access to all types of information held by public authorities, sets out exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities.

Any person can make a request to a public authority for information. In accordance with the legislation the individual must then be informed whether that information is covered by an exemption. Information held by the public authority and not covered by an exemption must be supplied subject to certain conditions being satisfied.

The Council is required to adopt and maintain a publication scheme setting out how it intends to publish the different classes of information it holds and whether there is a charge for the information.

The Publication Scheme

The publication scheme is a guide describing the information, which the District of Easington intends to make available to the public. The publication scheme will outline the following:-

- (a) the classes of information which the Council plans to publish and make available;
- (b) where that information can be accessed;
- (c) how much the Council may charge for obtaining a copy of that information.

Personal Information

The Data Protection Act 1998 still covers personal information. If you would like a copy of any personal information held by the Council in a structured file you will need to make that request in writing to David Taylor, Monitoring Officer, District of Easington, Council Offices, Seaside Lane, Easington, Peterlee, Co. Durham. SR8 3TN. There is currently a £10 fee for subject access requests under the Data Protection Act.

Using the Scheme

The Council's website provides access to information falling into the following categories. The home page of the website contains an A-Z index of the information available. It also contains a site plan to enable visitors to identify the material available. A hard copy of the site plan is available from the Council Offices to show you what documents can be supplied if you prefer to read them in a paper format.

Commitments of the Authority

In order to meet its obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Council commits itself to take the following steps:-

- (a) 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;

- (b) to specify the information which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below;
- (c) to proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line with the statements contained within the scheme;
- (d) to produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public;
- (e) to review and update on a regular basis the information the authority makes available under this scheme;
- (f) to produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available;
- (g) to make this publication scheme available to the public.

Classes of Information

The site plan will give you access to the following classes of information:-

(a) **Who we are and what we do**

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

(b) **What we spend and how we spend it**

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

(c) **What our priorities are and how we are doing**

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

(d) **How we make decisions**

Policy proposals and decisions, decision-making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultation.

(e) **Our Policies and Procedures**

Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.

(f) **Lists and Registers**

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

(g) **The services we offer**

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

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 considered 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.

In exceptional circumstances some information may be available only by viewing in person. If this is necessary contact details will be provided. An appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

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.

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.

Charges which may be made for information published under this scheme

The purpose of this scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by the authority for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum. Material which is published and accessed on the website will be provided free of charge.

Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by Parliament.

Charges may be made for actual disbursements incurred such as:-

Photocopying

Postage and packing

The costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information

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

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

Written Requests

Information held by the authority that is not published under this scheme can be requested in writing when its provision will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.