Bolton Council

Bolton Council's Publication Scheme under The Freedom Of Information Act 2000

December 2008

In implementing the Freedom of Information Act 2000 Bolton Council promotes an understanding of the work undertaken within the Council to foster a spirit of trust with the public and other organisations. We achieve this by promoting transparency in the way we make our decisions and by providing clear information about our policies and processes through our publication scheme. We deal with individual requests for information courteously and promptly and provide advice and assistance if necessary.

What is freedom of information?

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities. It lists exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities.

The Act came into force in two stages: -

- The first stage was in February 2003 when Bolton Council adopted a Publication Scheme.

- The second stage came into force in January 2005. Any person now making a request to a public authority for information must be informed whether the public authority holds that information and supplied with that information. This is subject to a number of exemptions listed in the Act.

What is a publication scheme?

A Publication Scheme is a guide to the classes of information that the Council publishes or intends to publish routinely. The term "published" is broad and is not limited to information produced in paper forms. As far as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is concerned, information made publicly available has been published. Therefore, information on the Council's website is as much part of the Publication Scheme as printed documents.

What are classes of information?

A requirement of the Act is to specify "classes" of information that the Council will publish within its Publication Scheme.

The Information Commissioner has issued a **'Model Publication Scheme'** and from 1ST January 2009 Bolton Council has adopted the 'Model Scheme'.

The Model Scheme contains 7 classes of information and these are as follows: -

- **Who we are and what we do**

- **What we spend and how we spend it**

- **What our priorities are and how we are doing**

- **How we make decisions**

- **Our policies and procedures**

- **Lists and registers**

- **The services we offer**

Examples of the type of information available under each are given below under the **Guide to Information.**

By adopting the Information Commissioner's 'Model Scheme' Bolton Council is committed to the following: -

- To proactively publish information (including environmental information which is held by it and contained within each class).
- To provide a means by which the Authority can ensure the public are aware of the sorts of the information the Council has committed to make readily available, how they can access and whether they will have to pay for it.
- To review and update the information on a regular basis and in accordance with The Association of Greater Manchester Authorities Publication Scheme Review Guidance.

How will I request additional information not covered by this scheme?

The Council includes as much information in the Publication Scheme as it can however, if you cannot find what you are looking for you can make a request for the information.

The Act is retrospective and information requests can be for information created before the Act came fully in to force in 2005. However, where any of the information comes within an exempt category either under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or other relevant legislation, it will be published with the exempt material deleted.

Will I be charged for information?

Material which is published and accessed on the website can be downloaded free of charge. Some information may only be available in hard copy and some information will only be available for inspection. Charges may be made for information subject to a legal charging regime. Charges under the publication scheme may be made for actual disbursements such as: -

- Photocopying
- Printing
- Postage and packaging
- The cost directly incurred as a result of viewing information

Any charges will be in accordance with the Council's policy.

Who do I contact?

For information concerning the scheme or if you wish to make a request for other information you can contact the following:

Corporate Information Unit
Room 320, Town Hall
Bolton BL1 1RU

Tel 01204 331031
Email freedomofinfo@bolton.gov.uk

The information described in this scheme can be found on the Council's website at the following address:

www.bolton.gov.uk

You can use the A-Z or the Search facility to find information on the site.

Making a complaint, suggestion or compliment

If you are not satisfied with the Council's response to a request for information you may make a complaint to the address below: -

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Bolton Council
Town Hall
Bolton BL1 1RU

Email freedomofinfo@bolton.gov.uk

If after going through the Council's formal complaint and appeals system you are still not satisfied then the Freedom of Information Act 2000 makes provision for you to complain directly to the Information Commissioner's Office: -

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

http://www.ico.gov.uk/

If you have any suggestions or compliments, we need to know so that we can improve our service to you. Please contact the Corporate Information Unit as above.

Advice and assistance

If you need help to make a request for information you may contact the Corporate Information Unit as above

Reviewing and maintaining the scheme

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 states that a publication scheme should be reviewed from time to time. The Council is responsible for reviewing and maintaining this guide to information and the data it contains. Material will be updated and any outdated information will be removed. This guide and operation of the scheme will be reviewed annually in accordance with The Association of Greater Manchester Authorities Publication Scheme Review Guidance.

Copyright

Reproducing material supplied under this Publication Scheme without the express permission of the Council may be an infringement of copyright. Requests for permission should be addressed to the Corporate Information Unit

Bolton Council's Guide to Information

The Council's A-Z web pages provide a guide to the information available and there is also a search facility to assist you to find other information that may not be included in the A-Z.

The guidance below is intended to assist you by giving some examples of the type of information the Council routinely makes available. Where a document is indicated within this guidance it will be the current version.

1 Who we are and what we do

- **Council constitution**

The Council's Constitution.

- **Council democratic structure**

Information about the functioning and process of meetings (Council Meetings, Executive and other Committees). Information about decision-making and scrutiny.

- **Council directorate structure**

Information about the various directorate areas within the Council, plus contact details for the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors.

- **Location and opening times of council properties**

Information about locations, opening times and contact details of the Council's centres/buildings, which are there to enable the public to access Council services.

- **Currently elected councillors' information and contact details**

Currently elected councillors including party, membership of committees, address, telephone number and email contact.

- **Contact details for all customer-facing departments**

Telephone numbers for customer contacts or one-stop shops

- **Most recent election results**

Election results indicating the political composition of the Council

- **Relationships with other authorities**

Information for example about the Greater Manchester Fire Service, The Association of Greater Manchester Authorities, Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive and the Waste Disposal Authority.

2 What we spend and how we spend it

- **Financial statements, budgets and variance reports**

The Council's Statement of Accounts

- **Capital programme**

The Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan

- **Spending reviews**

The Council's Statement of Accounts and Committee reports

- **Financial audit reports**

For example within District Audit Reports, Annual Governance Reports and Best Value Reports

- **The members' allowances scheme and the allowances paid under it to councillors each year**

The allowances members are entitled to claim and the amount each member received in expenses.

- **Staff allowances and expenses**

Mileage, accommodation, subsistence rates that can be claimed by staff.

- **Pay and grading structure**

Salary bands for all grades, including senior and chief officer grades.

- **Details of contracts currently being tendered**

Procurement policies and guidance.

Contracts currently available for public tender.

- **List of contracts awarded and their value**

Contracts awarded under the Public Contract Regulations 2006 as published in The Official Journal of the European Union.

- **District auditor's reports**

For example District Audit Reports, Annual Governance Reports and Best Value Reports.

- **Financial statements for projects and events**

The Council's Statement of Accounts

- **Internal financial regulations**

Financial regulations under the Council's Standing Orders, as contained in the Council's Constitution.

- **Funding for partnership arrangements**

Partnership funding for example The Children's Fund which was launched as part of the government's commitment to tackle disadvantage among children and young people.

3 What Our Priorities Are And How Are We Doing

- **Annual reports**

The Council's Annual Report / The Council's Plan.

- **Strategies and business plans for services provided by the Council**

Strategies, business and service plan for directorates, departments and services including The Council Plan and the Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan.

- **Best value performance plans**

For example best value performance plans and auditor's reports.

- **Internal and external organisation performance reviews**

Performance information including for example Comprehensive Performance Assessments, The Council Plan and Improvement Plan, performance improvement plans for departments.

- **Strategies developed in partnership with other authorities**

For example housing strategies and plans, education strategies, homeless strategies, customer involvement strategies, crime reduction strategies.

- **Economic development action plan**

Economic development strategy and plan.

- **Forward plan**

The Council's Forward Plan which details the Key Decisions that the Council is going to take over a four month period.

- **Capital strategy**

Capital and Asset Management Strategies and Plans.

- **Best value performance indicators**

Information about the Council's Best Value Performance Plan and about inspections and annual governance reports.

- **District auditor's reports on the best value performance plan and performance indicators**

For example within District Audit Reports within the Annual Report and Best Value Reports.

- **Comprehensive performance assessment**

Information about Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

- **Inspection reports**

Publicly available inspection reports for example Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Reports, The Council's Annual Report, and Youth Service Termly Reports.

- **Local Area Agreements**

Partnership agreements made by the Council by working with various groups and partnerships in the public, private, voluntary, community and faith sectors.

- **Statistical information produced in accordance with the Council's and departmental requirements**

For example information about schools attendance, and population and employment.

- **Impact assessments**

Executive Reports containing Impact Assessments (such as Equality Impact Assessments).

- **Service standards**

Customer Charter and Service Standards.

- **Public service agreements**

Local public service agreements

4 How we make decisions

- **Timetable of council meetings**

Committee dates for the current year

- **Agendas, officers' reports, background papers and minutes of council committee, sub committee and standing forum meetings.**

Public information on the Council's decision recording system.

- **Major policy proposals and decisions**

Information on The Council's Forward Plan and via public information on the Council's decision recording system

- **Facts and analyses of facts considered when framing major policies**

Information on The Council's Forward Plan and via public information on the Council's decision recording system

- **Public consultations**

Consultation papers or information, any summary of the responses and the outcome of the consultation exercise.

5 Our policies and procedures

- **Policies and procedures for conducting council business**

The Council's Constitution.

- **Policies and procedures for delivering our services**

For example Customer Charter and Equality and Diversity Policy.

- **Policies and procedures about the recruitment and employment of staff**

For example employment information, current vacancies, Recruitment Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, Human Resources Policy, Health and Safety Policy.

- **Customer service**

For example Customer Service Policy and Complaints policy.

- **Records management and personal data policies**

For example Data Protection Policy and Records Management Policy

- **Charging regimes and policies**

For example Licensing Fees and Charges, Building Control Charges, Service Charges for Council Tenants, Local Land Charges.

6 Lists And Registers

These may be available for inspection only.

- **. Public registers and registers held as public records**

For example Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Register of Electors, Register of Premises Licences and Club Premises Licences, Register of Hackney Carriage Drivers.

- **Asset registers and information asset register**

Corporate Asset Management Plan.

- **Register of councillors' financial and other interests**

Register of Members' Interests in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000 [Section 81]

- **Register of gifts and hospitality**

For council officers at assistant director level and above.

- **Highways, licensing, planning, commons, footpaths etc**

For example Definitive Maps, Register of Adopted Highways, Register of Planning Applications Register of Common Land.

- **Register of electors**

The Register of Electors and information about the Register and where it can be inspected

7 Services Provided By The Council

Details of all the Council's Services can be found in the Council's A-Z of Services.

- **Regulatory and licensing responsibilities**

For example hackney carriage licensing, motor salvage licensing, amusement licensing, liquor licensing.

- **Services for local businesses**

For example business services and advice in respect of financial support, property advice, business opportunities, recruitment of staff.

- **Services for other organisations**

For example student groups, youth groups and club activities.

- **Services for members of the public**

Details of all the Council's Services can be found on the Council's website. You can use the A-Z or the Search facility to find information.

- **Services for which the council is entitled to recover a fee, together with those fees**

For example Licensing Fees and Charges, Building Control Charges, Service Charges for Council Tenants, Local Land Charges.

- **Information for visitors to the area, leisure information, events, museums, libraries and archive collections**

Information about the local area.

- **Leaflets, booklets and newsletters**

Various leaflets and council publications available in council offices, district centres, libraries etc.

- **Advice and guidance**

For example advice on debts and benefits, consumer advice, affordable housing.

- **Media releases**

Press statements and releases.

- **Election Information**

For example election results, forthcoming elections and voting procedures.