

Oldham Council

**FREEDOM OF
INFORMATION
PUBLICATION SCHEME**

01 January 2009



Oldham
Council

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – OLDHAM COUNCIL PUBLICATION SCHEME

In implementing the Freedom of Information Act 2000 Oldham 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, 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 Oldham Council adopted a Publication Scheme

The second stage came into force in January 2005 and 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 to the 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 identify “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 Oldham Council has adopted the ‘Model Scheme’.

The 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 are given below under the Guide to Information.

By adopting the Information Commissioner's 'Model Scheme' Oldham 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 can they access it and whether they will have to pay for it.

To review and update the information on an annual basis

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 fully retrospective and information requests can be for information created before the Act came fully into force in 2005. However, where any of the information comes within an exempt category 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. 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

Postage and packaging

The cost directly incurred as a result of viewing information

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

WHO DO I CONTACT?

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

Information.manager@oldham.gov.uk

The information can be found in under the Council's website at the following link:

Council Publications: <http://www.oldham.gov.uk/council/publications.htm>

Council A-Z of services: http://www.oldham.gov.uk/a-z_of_services/a-z_of_services_az.htm

Council Website Search Facility:

http://www.oldham.gov.uk/search_result.htm?col=ombccms&lk=1&ws=1&qt=&search=Go%3E%3E

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: -

Director of Legal and Democratic Services
OMBC PO Box 33
Civic Centre
West Street
Oldham OL1 1UL

If after going through the Council's formal information complaint procedures 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:

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.

http://www.oldham.gov.uk/az_of_services/cs-corporate-complaints.htm

ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

If you need help to make a request for information you may contact the following: -

Information.manager@oldham.gov.uk

REVIEWING AND MAINTAINING THE SCHEME

The Freedom of Information Act 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 AGMA Publication Scheme Review Guidance.

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OLDHAM 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 be included in the A-Z.

The guidance below is intended to assist you by giving 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, including the those holding the posts of Chief Executive, Members of the Strategic Management Team and chief officers

Location and opening times of council properties

Information about locations, opening times and contact details of all 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 details.

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 GM 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 public 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

For example the allowances members are entitled to claim and the amount each member receives 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 within 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 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 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, Annual Governance Reports 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, Local Land Charges.

6 LISTS AND REGISTERS

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 Directory 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 in the Council's Directory of Services.

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.

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