

St Albans City & District Council
Freedom of Information Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 St Albans City & District Council (the Council) is committed to openness and transparency regarding provision of information in support of the legislative requirements of the Freedom of Information (FOIA) Act 2000 (the Act).
- 1.2 This policy confirms the Council's commitment to ensuring that there will be a presumption in favour of disclosure, subject to any exemptions under the FOIA. A culture of transparency and accountability in the provision of information exists unless the balance of public interest lies in withholding it.

2. Scope

- 2.1 The policy should be read in conjunction with the Freedom of Information procedures developed by the Council, which detail the responsibilities of Officers and the requirements and reporting procedures under the legislation.
- 2.2 Access to the following information is covered by other legislation and forms exemptions under the Act:
- All information that is "environment information" as defined by the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004;
 - "Personal data" concerning living persons from which an individual can be identified under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Law Enforcement Directive (LED) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (which replaces the Data Protection Act 1998).

3. Key Commitments

- 3.1 The Council will:
- Adopt the ICO Publication Scheme and maintain a comprehensive **Guide to Information** that sets out what information is readily accessible, without the need for a FOI request;
 - Seek to acknowledge all FOI requests within **3 working days**;
 - Respond promptly and fully within the **20 working days** specified by the Act, (which commences the day after the receipt of the request);
 - Inform the requester promptly where **clarification** is required to process the request;
 - Consider the **exemptions** provided in the Act and where **qualified exemptions** apply, disclose the information unless the balance of **public interest** lies in withholding it;
 - Consult with **third parties** (e.g. contractors) before disclosing information that could affect their rights and interests, whilst retaining the final decision on disclosure;
 - Record all requests and responses and monitor performance in handling requests and internal reviews;
 - Adhere to the Codes of Practice set out in Sections 45 (Guidance to Relevant Authorities) & 46 (Keeping, Management & Destruction of Records) of the Act in recognition of the duty to maintain high standards;
 - Charge for information requests, where applicable, in line with the FOI Fees Regulations or other applicable regulations;
 - Ensure that there is a senior officer with specific responsibility for Freedom of Information in the organisation;

- Ensure that all staff (permanent, temporary, contract or other) and elected Councillors are aware of their obligations under the Act through appropriate guidance/training;
- Acknowledge and process all requests for an Internal Review in accordance with the Internal Review Procedure.

4. Review

4.1 This policy and the associated procedures will be subject to annual review.

Author	
Policy created & reviewed	September 2011 Reviewed December 2013, September 2015, March 2017, March 2018, May 2018
Policy created by	Regulatory Solicitor & Complaints and Information Assurance Officer
Policy review due	March 2019