



Epping Forest  
District Council

# Corporate Policy

## Freedom of Information - Guide to Information



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides a general right of access to recorded information held by public authorities (other than personal information regulated by the Data Protection Act 1998).
- 1.2 This guide to Information should be read in conjunction with the Council's Freedom of Information Publication Scheme. The Publication Scheme is a legal requirement under the Freedom of Information Act and commits the Council to make information easily available to the public without the need for individuals to make a specific request. The Publication Scheme is available on the Council's website
- 1.3 The Guide to information specifies the information that the Council publishes and how it is made available. Many of the publications referred to in this guide are available via the Council's [website](#). Such publications may also be available in hard copy and details of how to obtain copies are provided within each class. All publications are provided free of charge unless otherwise indicated.
- 1.4 The Council recognises that some information may not be suitable for uploading to the website, such as that held only in hard copy or very large files. Where information is not available online, it is still listed in this guide, with contact details so that requests to view the information can be made. Whilst some information may therefore be available to view in person only, this will be reserved for those exceptional circumstances where it is the only practicable option. Information will also be made available for inspection or provided in hard-copy for people that do not have access to the internet or require information in alternative formats.
- 1.5 There are several circumstances under which the Council is not required to make information routinely available. These are when:
  - (a) the information is not held;
  - (b) the information is exempt from disclosure under one of the exemptions of the Freedom of Information Act or an exception of the Environmental Information Regulations, or its release is prohibited under another statute;
  - (c) the information is archived, out of date or otherwise inaccessible; or,
  - (d) it would be impractical or resource-intensive to prepare the material for routine release.
- 1.6 If you cannot find what you are looking for within this Guide to Information, you should contact the Freedom of Information Officer for more information. Information not specifically mentioned in the Scheme may still be available on request.

## **2. PERSONAL INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The Freedom of Information Act does not allow the Council to publish or make publically available any private or confidential information that it holds about individuals. Generally correspondence sent or received by the Council and all information relating to private individuals is excluded from disclosure because it is classified as personal data and covered by the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 2.2 Individuals have a general right of access to their personal information under the Data Protection Act. Requests for access to personal information held by the Council should be made to:

Data Protection Officer,  
Epping Forest District Council,  
Civic Offices,

High Street,  
Epping,  
Essex, CM16 4BZ.

2.3 There is a charge for a Subject Access Request, which is currently £10.00.

### **3. ABOUT THE EPPING FOREST DISTRICT AND EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

3.1 The Epping Forest District stretches northwards from the urban areas of Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell, Loughton, and Waltham Abbey bordering Greater London through small market towns (eg. Epping and Ongar) and villages to predominantly agricultural areas. The District has a population of approximately 124,659 (2011 Census) and covers an area of approximately 33800 hectares (130.5 square miles).

3.2 Within the District is a large part of Epping Forest itself, one of the most significant surviving areas of ancient forest. The Forest is managed by the Corporation of London for the benefit of local people. The Lee Valley Regional Park follows the western border of the District with Hertfordshire. The Park provides leisure and recreation activities and is a habitat rich in flora and wildlife.

3.3 Epping Forest District Council comprises 58 elected councillors representing 32 wards. The Council's vision is to make the Epping Forest District a great place to live, work, study and do business. The Council is responsible for a variety of statutory and non-statutory services for local residents and visitors, including:

- Benefits administration;
- Council tax and business rates collection;
- Electoral registration;
- Emergency planning;
- Environmental health;
- Grounds maintenance and arboriculture;
- Housing;
- Land drainage;
- Leisure and culture;
- Licensing;
- Local land charges;
- Museum;
- Parking;
- Planning;
- Recycling, waste management and street cleansing.

3.4 The Council's services are provided by the following Directorates:

- Communities;
- Governance;
- Neighbourhoods; and
- Resources.

3.5 The Council's main offices are Civic Offices, High Street, Epping, Essex, CM16 4BZ. The Civic Offices are open to the public from 9.00 a.m. to 5.15 p.m. on Monday to Thursday and from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. on Friday. Community and Cultural Services are based at the Council's offices in Hemnall Street, Epping, Essex CM16 4LU.

3.6 There are four leisure centres in the district, which are managed by an external contractor on behalf of the Council. Information on the leisure centres is available on the Council's website at:

<http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/index.php/out-and-about/sports-centres-and-pools>

- 3.7 The Council owns the site of a former Royal Air Force airfield at North Weald Bassett. Information on the events and aviation activities that take place at North Weald Airfield are available on the Council's website at:

<http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/index.php/out-and-about/north-weald-airfield>

- 3.8 The Council's Museum is situated at 39/41 Sun Street, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 1EL. Information on the events and activities that take place at the museum are available on the Council's website at:

<http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/index.php/out-and-about/museums>

#### **4. CLASSES OF INFORMATION**

- 4.1 The Council's Freedom of Information Publication Scheme covers several classes of information, which are described in the following sections of this Guide. The information held by the Council within each class is updated and re-published as required or when changes are made to the information.

#### **5. WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO**

- 5.1 This class of information covers organisational information, structures, locations and contacts. The following information is published by the Council:

- [The Council's constitution](#)
- [The Council's democratic structure](#) (contained within Articles 6-11 of the Constitution)
- [The Council's management structure](#) (contained within Article 13 of the Constitution)
- [The Council's senior officers and responsibilities](#)
- [The Council's offices and information services](#)
- [Currently elected councillors' information and contact details](#)
- [Contact details for all customer-facing departments](#)
- [Election results](#) (recent elections)

- 5.2 The Council works closely with other public authorities and organisations that provide services for the District, including:

- [Essex Police](#);
- [Essex Fire and Rescue Service](#);
- [Epping Forest Citizens' Advice Bureau](#);
- [Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership](#);
- [Lee Valley Regional Park Authority](#);
- [Corporation of London](#);
- [Epping Forest Youth Council](#); and
- [West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group](#).

- 5.3 A range of services for the district are provided by [Essex County Council](#), including:

- Country parks;
- Youth activities;
- Births, deaths, marriages and ceremonies;
- Citizenship;
- Coroner service;
- Trading standards;
- Libraries;
- Schools;

- Adult learning;
- Waste disposal;
- Care for adults and children;
- Essex records office;
- Public transport;
- Highways;
- Public rights of way;
- Traffic management systems; and
- The blue badge scheme.

5.4 Some services in the district are provided by [local town and parish councils](#), including:

- Allotments;
- Cemeteries;
- Public halls;
- Recreation grounds; and
- Markets.

## 6. WHAT WE SPEND AND HOW WE SPEND IT

6.1 This class of information covers financial information about projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit, for the current and previous two financial years. This information relates not only to the council as a whole but also for its directorates or departments as cost centres. The following information is published by the Council:

- Financial statements, budgets and variance reports
- Capital Programme
- Spending reviews
- Financial audit reports
- [Statutory Statement of Accounts](#)
- [Members' Allowances Scheme](#) (contained within Part 6 of the Constitution)
- [Allowances paid to councillors each year](#)
- Pay Policy Statement
- Staff allowances and expenses
- Pay and grading structure
- Election expenses (returns or declarations and accompanying documents relating to election expenses sent to the Council) (available on [request](#))
- [Procurement Rules](#) (contained within Part 4 of the Constitution)
- [Expenditure and contracts](#)
- Details of contracts and tenders to businesses and to the voluntary community and social enterprise sector
- Details of grants to the voluntary community and social enterprise sector
- District auditor's report
- Financial statements for projects and events
- [Internal Financial Regulations](#) (contained within Part 4 of the Constitution)
- Funding for partnership arrangements
- [National Non-Domestic Rates Disclosures](#)

## 7. WHAT OUR PRIORITIES ARE AND HOW WE ARE DOING

7.1 This class of information covers strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews, for the current and previous three years. This information relates not only to the council as a whole but also for its directorates or departments as cost centres. The following information is published by the Council:

- [The Council's Corporate Plan](#)

- [Overview and Scrutiny annual report](#)
- [Performance reports \(Key Objectives\)](#) (available through agenda for the Cabinet)
- [Performance reports \(Key Performance Indicators\)](#) (available through agenda for the Council's select committees)
- [Directorate Business Plans](#)
- Internal and external organisation performance reviews, including external audits
- Strategies developed in partnership with other authorities
- Economic Development Plan
- [Major policy proposals and decisions \(Key Decisions\)](#)
- Inspection reports
- Statistical information produced in accordance with the council's and departmental requirements
- Impact assessments

## 8. HOW WE MAKE DECISIONS

8.1 This class of information covers the Council's decision-making processes and records of its decisions. The following information is published by the Council:

- [Calendar of council and committee meetings](#)
- [Agenda, reports, background papers and minutes of council and committee meetings](#)
- [Webcasts of council and committee meetings](#)
- [Major policy proposals and decisions \(Key Decisions\)](#)
- [Public consultation](#)

## 9. OUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

9.1 This class of information covers current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering the Council's services and responsibilities. The following information is published by the Council:

- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Freedom of Information Publication Scheme](#)
- [Compliments and Complaints Scheme](#)
- [Equality Policy, Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives](#)
- [Value for Money Strategy](#)
- [Data Quality Strategy](#)
- [Current employment vacancies](#)
- [Procurement Strategy](#)
- [Private Sector House Condition Survey 2011](#)
- [Tenant Census 2014](#)
- [STAR Survey 2015](#)
- [Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy](#)
- [Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy](#)
- [Grants Policy \(Private Sector Housing\)](#)
- [Houses in Multiple Occupation Policy 2015-2018](#)
- [Overcrowding Policy](#)
- [Leaseholders Handbook](#)
- [Tenancy Policy](#)
- [Careline Annual Report](#)
- [Housing Service Strategies](#)
- Asset Management Plan
- Smoking and Vaping Policy
- Other strategies

## 10. LISTS AND REGISTERS

10.1 This class covers a range of information set out within lists and registers. The following information is published by the Council:

- Charging regimes and policies
- Public registers and registers held as public records
- Asset registers
- Information asset register
- Register of CCTV locations
- [Register of councillors' financial and other interests](#)
- Senior officers' declaration of interests
- Register of gifts and hospitality
- [Planning applications and appeals](#) (through searchable facility)
- [Assets of Community Value Register](#)
- [Register of Members' Interests](#)
- Register of Electors (Open Register only) (available on [request](#))
- Other registers
- Environmental information

## 11. SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE COUNCIL

11.1 This class covers Information about the services the council provides including leaflets, guidance and newsletters. The following information is published by the Council:

- [A-Z of services](#)
- [News releases and social media](#)
- [Petitions and e-petitions](#)
- [Services for local businesses](#)
- [Regulatory and licensing responsibilities](#)
- Services for which the council is entitled to recover a fee, together with those fees
- [Information for visitors](#) (including leisure information, events and museums etc.)
- Leaflets, booklets and newsletters (available in hard-copy in the reception area of the Civic Offices))
- Advice and guidance
- [Election information](#)
- Environmental information

## 12. REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

13.1 You have the right under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, subject to certain exemptions, to request information not covered by the Publication scheme. Requests for information must be made in writing. Requests can be submitted by using the [form](#) available on the Council's website. Requests can also be made directly to the following address or by email to [foienquiries@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:foienquiries@eppingforestdc.gov.uk):

Freedom of Information Officer,  
Epping Forest District Council,  
Civic Offices,  
High Street,  
Epping,  
Essex, CM16 4BZ.

13.2 Additional information regarding this Guide to Information or the Council's Publication Scheme can also be obtained from the Freedom of Information Officer.

## 13. PUBLICATION OF DATASETS FOR RE-USE

13.1 The Council must publish under its Publication Scheme any dataset it holds that has been requested, together with any updated versions, unless it is satisfied that it is not appropriate to do so. So far as reasonably practicable, the dataset must be published in an electronic form that is capable of re-use.

13.2 If the dataset or any part of it is a relevant copyright work and the Council is the only owner, it must make it available for re-use under the terms of a specified licence. Datasets in which the Crown owns the copyright or the database rights are not relevant copyright works.

#### **14. RE-USE OF PUBLIC SECTOR INFORMATION - INFORMATION ASSET LIST**

14.1 Where permission for re-use is granted, the Council will add the information type to an Information Asset List. The list will therefore provide a source of reference to applicants as to the type of information which has been approved for re-use. We will also link this asset list to the Council's Freedom of Information Publication Scheme.

#### **15. DOCUMENT HISTORY**

14.1 The designated Freedom of Information Officer, in conjunction with the Director of Governance as appropriate, is responsible for the maintenance of this Guide to Information. The guide will be subject to review to reflect, for example, relevant legislative changes, new case law, or revised guidance published by the Information Commissioners Office. The guide will be updated to reflect the publication by the Council of updated or additional information

<b>Prepared/Revised</b>	<b>Written by</b>	<b>Agreed/Authorised</b>	<b>Details of Change(s)</b>
August 2016 (Review)	S. Tautz (Freedom of Information Officer)	Corporate Governance Group (24/8/16)	General update of policy text.