

Freedom of Information Act 2000



Publication Scheme

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Information Governance Department
Town Hall
Blackburn
BB1 7DY

Tel: 01254 585585

Email: Accesstoinformation@blackburn.gov.uk

GUIDANCE ON PUBLICATION SCHEMES, CLASSES OF INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE TO INFORMATION

In implementing the Freedom of Information Act 2000 Blackburn with Darwen Borough 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 Blackburn with Darwen Borough 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 our 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 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council will publish within its Publication Scheme.

The Information Commissioner has issued a ‘Model Publication Scheme’ and Blackburn with Darwen Borough 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**

By adopting the Information Commissioner’s ‘Model Scheme’ the 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?

Blackburn with Darwen Borough 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:

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Information Governance Department
Town Hall
Blackburn
BB1 7DY

Tel: 01254 585585

Email: Accesstoinformation@blackburn.gov.uk

MAKING A COMPLAINT, SUGGESTION OR COMPLIMENT

If you are not satisfied with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's response to a request for information you may make a complaint to the address listed above.

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: -

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. Feedback forms are available in Appendix 1.

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.

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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 Information Governance Department at the address outlined above.

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.

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 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.

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.

2 WHAT WE SPEND AND HOW WE SPEND IT

Budgets

The Council prepares an annual budget which shows the expected revenue expenditure on services, and the income with which to fund that expenditure.

Capital expenditure

Capital expenditure is money spent by the Council on things such as roads, buildings and equipment. The Council and its residents receive the benefit from capital expenditure over a longer period than the current financial year.

Comprehensive income and expenditure Statement

This statement shows the cost in the year, in accordance with accounting regulations, of running Council services.

Contracts currently being tendered

Contracts currently available for public tender.

Contracts register

The contracts register keeps companies informed of potential contracting and sub-contracting opportunities. It also provides information about the Council's service providers.

Internal financial regulations

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

Medium term financial strategy

The Medium Term Financial Strategy is approved each March at the same time as the annual budget is set. Its purpose is to set the financial framework for the Council for the medium term, considering the Council's strategic objectives and major projects, and it is an integral part of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Pay policy including Chief Executive and directors' pay scales

This Pay Policy Statement sets out the Council's approach to pay policy in accordance with the requirements of Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011. The purpose of the statement is to provide transparency with regard to the Council's approach to setting the pay of its employees (excluding teaching staff working in local authority schools).

Statement of accounts

The statement of accounts has been produced to make them easier to understand. Although the figures are based on the statutory accounts, they have been modified to provide more meaningful information.

Section 251/52

At the beginning of each financial year Local authorities (LAs) are required under section 251 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, to publish a budget statement for that year. Section 251 replaces Section 52 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Spending publication

Blackburn with Darwen Council publishes details of all payments to suppliers in response to the government's request that local authorities publish details of payments over £500 to external suppliers.

Treasury management strategy

The Council sets a Treasury Management Strategy before the start of each year. This sets out the Council's planned approach to managing the risks associated with investment and borrowing, including limits to investments with different counterparties.

3 WHAT OUR PRIORITIES ARE AND HOW ARE WE DOING

Annual reports

Annual reports submitted to the Annual Council and Finance Council.

Community cohesion strategy: 2010 – 2013 and community cohesion strategy summary

This strategy aims to provide an outline of the Local Strategic Partnership's approach to community cohesion, integration and equality within Blackburn with Darwen.

Corporate plan

The corporate plan agreed by elected members on Thursday, August 30, 2012 sets out, for residents, staff and partners, the Council's top priorities for the next three years. It describes how the Council will continue to improve services and prepare for the difficult financial challenge ahead.

Crime and community safety

Includes crime statistics, crime trends, recorded & detected crime and road safety.

Educational attainment

The school achievement and performance tables provide a range of data.

Equality strategy 2012-2016 and Equality watch: equality monitoring report

An important part of quantifying our equality commitment is to monitor the workforce profile and service users experience as included in the Equality Strategy. Monitoring and analysing the workforce profile is crucial as it enables the Council to compare its workforce to its local demographics, identifying gaps or areas which need positive action which can then influence the Council's Recruitment Strategy.

Health and well being

Includes resident's health, low birth weights, teenage expectancy, mortality and physical activity.

4 HOW WE MAKE DECISIONS

Agendas, reports, background papers and minutes of council committees

You will find information available here on The Executive Board, Council and Committee meetings, including agenda and minutes of those meetings

Membership of council committees and outside bodies

Public consultations

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council consults and engages with residents about a variety of issues using different methods. We do this because residents have a democratic right to have their say and because the views and opinions of residents can help us develop better services.

Recent council decisions

Committee decisions.

Timetable of council meetings

Committee dates for the current year.

5 OUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Data protection policy and Records management policy

This Data Protection Policy replaces the Council's previous Data Protection Policy, version 1.00. The Records Management Policy gives guidance for the retention and destruction of records, both in electronic form and on paper.

Equality and diversity

The Council has statutory duty to publish equality impact assessments which are needed to evidence the measures the authority is putting into place to meet the requirements stated in the Equality Act.

Policies for children, young people and families

Short breaks statement, family & friends, private fostering statement of purpose and continuum of needs & response.

Safeguarding adults policies, procedures and forms

Safeguarding adults procedures, SA1 safeguarding adults alter form, BwD Adults Safeguarding Policy and BwD Local Safeguarding Adults Business Plan

PLANNING

Blackburn with Darwen core strategy

The strategy was adopted in 2011 and is the borough's overarching planning document. It sets out priorities for future planning and development of the borough and is used when determining planning applications.

Blackburn with Darwen saved local plan

Some Blackburn with Darwen Saved Local Plan policies have been retained following the adoption of the Core Strategy and will be used when determining planning applications until they are superseded by the borough's emerging Local Plan.

Housing space standards policy

The Council has now adopted a Housing Space Standards policy for new dwellings and Housings in Multiple Occupation.

Statement of community involvement (SCI)

Planning policy documents are subject to public consultation and the Council has produced a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which guides how consultations are carried out.

Supplementary planning documents (SPDs) and supplementary planning guidance notes (SPGs)

The Council has produced a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and Supplementary Planning Guidance notes (SPGs) which provide further information and guidance on planning policies and proposals.

6 LISTS AND REGISTERS

Club premises certificate register

View the register of all Club Premises Certificates Issued

Cooling towers

Premises where cooling towers and evaporative condensers are situated must register with the local authority. A full list of premises who are registered within the Blackburn with Darwen area are available, along with registration forms for owners of new / previous premises.

Houses in multiple occupation (HMO) register

This register covers those properties that are three or more storeys and made up of bedsits or with a mixture of self-contained flats. It covers properties across the borough and shows licensee's contact names and specific information on each property.

Other registers

Registers including food premises, contaminated land register, pet shops, scrap metal dealers, taxi drivers and fireworks.

Premises for civil marriages & civil partnership register

Approved premises for civil marriages and civil partnership registration.

Register of councillors' financial and other interests

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

7 SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE COUNCIL

Adult protection

Vulnerable adults can be physically, sexually, emotionally or financially abused. Abuse can also take the form of neglect, discrimination or self-neglect. You can report any concerns in confidence.

Allotments

Details of the nine Council run sites in Blackburn and one private site.

Benefits: housing benefit and council tax benefit

Housing benefits and Council Tax benefit are means tested benefits payable to people who are responsible for paying rent and /or Council Tax based on the: amount of money you receive, amount of savings and investments that you have and the circumstances of the people who live with you.

Bins, recycling, rubbish and waste

When bins are collected, help with bins, different colour bins, extra bins, bins when you move house and recycling.

Child protection; safeguarding children

The Council provides advice on child protection enquiries and investigates where there is reason to be concerned that a child is at risk. It also provides advice to members of the public communities and other agencies on any issues related to children who are vulnerable and provides advice and guidance is provided guidance on the Common Assessment Framework.

Election information

For example election results, forthcoming elections and voting procedures.

Entertainment & arts

What's On: events and attraction is Blackburn with Darwen, King Georges Hall, Darwen Library Theatre, Blakey's Café Bar, Museum & Art Gallery and Libraries.

Media releases

Press statements and releases.

Parking and Parking permits

Where to park in Blackburn and Darwen town centres and parking permits.

Parks, countryside and open spaces

There is a wide variety of parks, open spaces and countryside in Blackburn with Darwen.

Planning permission applications

Before making a planning application we recommend that you firstly seek advice. We encourage you to make and pay for your planning application on line to help speed up the process.

Schools

List of High Schools, Nursery Schools, Primary Schools and Special Schools. Additional information on school admissions, appeals, crossing patrols, governors, holidays and library service.

Sports and fitness

For example Beez card information, Health & Wellbeing, Sports & Leisure facilities and Swimming.

Taxi driver licenses

The Licensing service regulates the taxi industry; we ensure public safety is not undermined by using robust application procedures and regular compliance checks.

Visitors centres

There are three visitor centres.

Appendix One



Have your say on Information services

This leaflet outlines Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Freedom of Information feedback policy.

Blackburn with Darwen Council is committed to providing you with good and fair services. We want to listen, involve and respond to the needs of local people.

This leaflet outlines Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Freedom of Information feedback policy and sets out how the Council intends to do this by making use of your complaints, suggestions, comments and compliments.

Our aims

We want to:

- Make it easy for people to contact the Council and give us their views
- Ensure that when contact is made issues are dealt with quickly and consistently
- Help create equality of access to the Council
- Improve the Council's Access to Information services.

Comments & Suggestions

The Council also welcomes any comments or suggestions that you would like to make on our service. We encourage people to do this as it helps us to identify where services may need to be improved. Again, you can contact the service directly if you wish to do this or use the form attached to set out your comments & suggestions in writing.

Compliments

We also want you to tell us if you think we have done something right. If you have received a particularly good service or you like the way that we deliver our information please tell us.

The attached form will allow you to give us feedback in writing if you choose to do this.

A full copy of the Customer Feedback Policy is available on the Council website. Alternatively, a full copy is available on request by contacting the Council.

Making a complaint

If you aren't happy with a service that you have (or haven't) received from Information Governance then we want to know about it. You can make a complaint to the Council if:

- You think that it has done something in the wrong way
- Done something it should not have done
- Failed to do something it should have done.

Examples are unreasonable delay, poor treatment, or failure to follow proper procedures.

What shall I do if I am unhappy with a service?

We will always try to deal with the problem as quickly as possible and to do this we would ask you to contact the Information Governance Department in the first instance. They may be able to put things right there and then or at least look into the issue and come back to you.

If you have tried this approach or don't feel that it is appropriate you can ask for your complaint to be investigated formally.

This involves your complaint being passed to a complaints co-ordinator for the department concerned. They will ensure that a full investigation takes place and the director of the service (or their representative) will give you a full response to your complaint. All complaints are treated in the strictest of confidence.

When making a complaint you should provide as much information as possible. You can use the form that is attached to the back of this leaflet to help set out what your complaint is and what you would like us to do about it. Alternatively you can contact the Council by telephone or send us a letter or an e-mail. You may also want to ask someone to contact us on your behalf, this could be a friend or a relative or another person that you would like to choose to represent you.

We aim to acknowledge any complaints we receive within 3 working days and you should receive a full response to your complaint within 15 working days. If the complaint takes longer to investigate we will keep you informed.

What If I am still unhappy?

If after you have received your response you remain dissatisfied you can request that your complaint goes for review. A review may involve a meeting with the Chief Executive and a Councillor to help resolve the problem. Sometimes it won't be appropriate for a complaint to be considered again, for example if the decision has been made due to legal reasons. If this is the case we will contact you to let you know.

If your complaint progresses to an appeal stage then we should acknowledge your request within 3 working days and it should be carried out within 25 working days. Sometimes this may take longer if cases are complicated but we will keep you informed.

And if I still remain dissatisfied?

Hopefully we will be able to resolve your problem quickly but if you remain dissatisfied you can go to the Information Commissioner who can carry out an independent investigation.

The address for the Commissioner is:

Information Commissioner

Wycliffe House

Water Lane

Wilmslow

Cheshire

SK9 5AF

If you would like this leaflet in any other language or format, please contact us on (01254) 585226



Customer Feedback Form

I would like to make a:

Comment / Suggestion	
Compliment	
Complaint	

Which Department you would like to comment on? (If known):

--

My Comment /Compliment /Complaint is:

(Please put as much detail here as you can – including any reference numbers if this is relevant. Continue on a separate sheet of paper if necessary)

--

What would you like the Council to do?

(continue on a separate sheet of paper if necessary)

Please give us some information about yourself

Blackburn with Darwen Council will only use this data for limited purposes and will only keep your personal information for as long as is reasonably necessary. This data will be stored in line with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name			
Address			
			Postcode
Tel no			
E-mail			
Date			

Monitoring our Equal Opportunities Policy

We want to make sure that our services are fair and accessible to everyone. The following information helps us to check that this is the case. You don't have to fill in this part of the form and it will not affect your complaint in anyway.

Are You:

Male or Female	
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Disabled/Not disabled	
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Which age group are you?

Under 16	
16 to 24	
25 to 34	
35 to 44	
45 to 54	
55 to 64	
65 plus	

What is your ethnic background?

White	
Mixed Ethnicity	
Asian or Asian British	
Black or Black British	
Chinese or other ethnic group	

Please either return this form to: Blackburn with Darwen Council, Information Governance, G Floor, Town Hall, King William Street BB1 7DY, email to Accesstoinformation@blackburn.gov.uk , fax to 01254 585286 or hand the form in at any Council Office.