



Freedom of Information Policy

Introduction

Providing the right to information

South Holland Council recognises that the Freedom of Information Act provides the public with access to information that would otherwise be unavailable and is the route to providing and enabling more open and transparent public services.

We recognise, respect and value this right and our responsibilities to enable this transparency in its appropriate circumstances.

In promoting a sense of openness and transparency, we hope to build a strong sense of trust in all those who interact with the council.

What is our aim?

South Holland Council is committed to providing the right of access to information held. We recognise the need to effectively communicate with requesters whether the information is held, exempt or subject to a fee, support requesters to receive the information that is requested and treat requests for information equally, as appropriate.

Why are we doing it?

This policy supports our priorities of providing the right services, at the right time and in the right way.

Providing the right services and ensuring that we are transparent with our information allows us to build and grow trust with the public and support South Holland to thrive.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, we have a duty to:

- Inform the requester in writing whether information is held

- Where it is held, to communicate that information
- Comply with “the duty to confirm or deny”

This policy sets out our ambitions in line with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, full details of which are available in [The Act](#) and we will continue to work to the requirements of this Act and any changes that may occur following the publishing of this policy.

How will we do it?

As a Local Authority we will:

- Respond to requests for information adhere to the statutory time requirements of the act. Where all required information is provided from the requester in writing, we shall respond within 20 working days
- Publish certain information proactively, in line with the requirement for a publication scheme. Details of which are available in the [Publication Scheme](#)
- Consider any use of the exemptions available via [the Act Part II Exempt Information](#) and enact these appropriately, including where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit.
- Address all vexatious and contacts deemed unacceptable through our [Unreasonable and Vexatious policy](#)
- Allow appropriate use of data sets and re-use of data via our [re-use policy](#)
- Consider the application of [section 45 code of practice](#) which gives recommendations for public authorities about their handling of requests
- Consider the application of [section 46 code of practice](#) covers good records management practice and the obligations of public authorities under the Public Records Acts
- Consider the [Duty to provide advice and assistance \(section 16\)](#)
- Ensure everyone managing and handling information understands that they are responsible for following good information management practice
- Ensure staff who handle information are appropriately supervised and trained
- Ensure methods of handling information are regularly assessed and evaluated and that any disclosure of data will be in compliance with

approved procedures

- Abide by all requirements of the [Data Protection Act 2018](#) and [General Data Protection Regulations](#) to ensure that data is kept safe at all times and released where legally relevant to do so.

How will we measure our progress?

- We will monitor, where relevant and proportionate, the requests that are received in order to
 - Ensure we are meeting the statutory timescale of 20 working days
 - Continue to proactively publish relevant and appropriate information
- In line with the code of guidance requirements, we will publish:
 - information about the numbers of requests received
 - the timeliness of our responses
 - the number of requests where the information was granted
 - the number of requests where the information was withheld
 - the number of internal reviews

Who will do this?

- All staff because everyone has a responsibility to provide access to information
- The Corporate Improvement and Performance team because they have oversight of all requests including the logging, chasing and responding of requests
- Organisations that we commission or procure to provide direct services to our residents, where they are acting on behalf of the council and are eligible to provide information.
- Third parties who are users of information supplied by the Council will be required to confirm that they will abide by the requirements of the FOIA and allow audits by the Council of data held on its behalf (if requested); and Indemnify the Council against any prosecutions, claims, proceedings, actions or payments of compensation or damages, without limitation
- The Corporate Management Team because they have a responsibility to lead the right to information for the organisation.
- The Members in ensuring that they support provision of authority information

Further Information

- Further information can be found at the [Information Commissioner's Office](#)