



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Freedom of Information Policy

Version 1.2
(updated 25 February 2005 to reflect
the implementation of FOI request processing
and revised contact arrangements)

of

Portsmouth City Council
Civic Offices
Guildhall Square
Portsmouth
PO1 2PX

Portsmouth City Council

Freedom of Information Policy Incorporating the Publication Scheme

Introduction:

This policy relates to the Freedom of Information Act (“the Act”), which received royal assent in November 2000 and came into force fully in January 2005. The Act deals with information held by public bodies such as Portsmouth City Council and gives members of the public the right to see it. There are limitations to this right of inspection; most notably personal information still remains subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

As part of the Act all Local Authorities must have a Publication Scheme which has been approved by the information Commissioner. The Publication Scheme sets out the information which is either currently, or which will be routinely available and published. Much of the information listed in the Publication Scheme is already available, however the Publication Scheme is a dynamic document, and more types of information will be added over time.

The inclusion of something in the scheme does not mean that it is necessarily available for free, much of it will be, however some publications will be charged for. There is a desire within Portsmouth City Council that the majority of information should be available on the Internet. The scheme will make it clear what information is to be charged for and how much it will cost.

The purpose of the publication scheme is to enable citizens to know what information is readily available to them from Portsmouth City Council, without the need for them to make a formal request. The ultimate aim of the Freedom of Information Act is to develop a culture of openness within Local Government.

Information about Portsmouth City Council:

Portsmouth City Council is a unitary authority serving the needs of people in Portsmouth and the surrounding area. With nearly 200,000 people living within its boundaries Portsmouth is one of the most densely populated cities in the United Kingdom. Portsmouth has 22 conservation areas and has been a pioneer within the UK in ensuring that development schemes work with local people, to raise standards of older residential housing while maintaining the intrinsic character of each neighbourhood area.

Portsmouth has a thriving industrial and commercial sector, not just through its historic links with the Royal Navy but also with companies such as IBM, Zurich Insurance, Alenia Marconi Systems, EADS Astrium and Pall Europe all having their UK headquarters within the City. It is also a developing tourist centre attracting some 6.3 million visitors a year, a key attraction being the Royal Navy Historic Dockyard, home of HMS Victory, Lord Nelson’s flagship at the battle of Trafalgar and still the oldest commissioned warship in the world. The Mary Rose, King Henry VIII’s favourite warship, raised from the Solent waterway in 1982, and the Royal Navy’s first iron clad warship HMS Warrior (1860).

The city enjoys a prime central location on England's south coast, with connections to the national motorway network, and an express train link to London. Portsmouth is well served having one of the best connected UK Ferry Ports with four destinations in France and two in Spain.

As a unitary authority Portsmouth City Council undertakes nearly all the functions of Local Government including:

- Education
- Social Services
- Housing
- Trading Standards and Environmental Health
- Countryside and Planning
- Highways
- Leisure and Cultural Services
- Democratic Services

In co-operation with Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council operates the local Police and Fire services.

Notes on Using the Scheme:

The publication scheme lists classes of information, which Portsmouth City Council creates for use both within the Local Authority and externally. The scheme will enable the user to rapidly find information, which is routinely published or available. Although the council has its own internal structure the classes of information are of a general nature and should require no specific knowledge of the structure to navigate. There is also an index at the end of the scheme to assist you finding the information you need.

Publication does not refer solely to printed material, it has been widely interpreted and includes materials on our web site, individual documents held electronically, information leaflets, books, and reports. Portsmouth City Council tries to put as much information as possible on the website or make it available in the form of a free public leaflet.

It is the Council's intention that as much information as possible will be made available on an ongoing basis, as well as keeping historical data available where relevant.

Requesting Information:

The full provisions of the Act relating to requests for information from the public came into effect in January 2005.

The Act gives people two related rights:

1. The right to be told whether the information exists
2. The right to receive the information (and where possible in the format requested, for example, a copy, summary or right of inspection)

Both of these rights are subject to the exemptions specified in the Act, which may result in no information being disclosed, or even a refusal to conform or deny whether information is held.

The Act is fully retrospective, so where information is held, regardless of its age or format, it will be potentially available for release subject to the exemptions. The Act does not prevent Portsmouth City Council disposing of old records under its disposal policy.

The city council will charge for FOI requests in line with the national FOI fees regulations:

- If the cost of finding, retrieving and extracting the information does not exceed £450 (equivalent to 18 hours work), there will be no charge other than for disbursements (see below)
- If above cost exceeds £450, the city council will decline the request. However, we will assist the requester to refine the request and determine what might be achieved within the £450 limit.
- Disbursements (photocopying, copying to different media, postage etc) will be free up to £10. Above this, the city council will charge the full costs.
- Where fees are required, the city council will issue a Fees Notice requesting payment. Following this, the request will not be progressed until the fees have been paid. The time taken to pay the fees does not count as part of the 20 working day target for responding to requests.

Information may be provided in a variety of formats where this is possible; this will include Braille, Large Print, Audio, or a language other than English, upon request.

The city council has 20 working days to process a request, although this may be extended in certain circumstances, for example the clock stops if we have to clarify the request with the requester or whilst we are waiting for a fee to be paid.

The Act allows for Freedom of Information requests to be sent to anyone in Portsmouth City Council. However, it will assist us to deal with requests most promptly if they are sent to the following address. Request should be in writing (e.g. a letter, email or form available on the council's web site). The request should define the information that is required in as much detail as possible and give the requester's contact details.

Corporate Information Governance Officer
FOI/ICT Services
Portsmouth City Council
Civic Offices
Guildhall Square
Portsmouth
PO1 2BQ

Telephone 023 9268 8482.

Email: foi@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Notes about the Publication Scheme

Portsmouth City Council creates a huge number of documents in its day-to-day business. Many of these documents relate to individual people and thus may not be covered by the Act, however, they will still be covered by the Data Protection Act and its subject access rights.

There is another significant group of documents, which the city council requires to go through an approval process before they are published. In the context of this policy and Publication Scheme 'Approved' means that the document or its information has been formally approved by elected members through either the full council, executive members acting within their areas of authority, or officers acting under delegated powers.

Although the majority of information within a class of documents will fall to be published there will be occasions where sections of a document will contain information which is exempt from the provisions of the Act. In these cases the Publication Scheme will exclude the exempt parts.

The Publication Scheme has three main objectives:

- To show what information Portsmouth City Council publishes or intends to publish as a matter of course
- To detail how and where the information will be published.
- To define what charges, if any, are to be made for the information.

Comments or Complaints

if you have any comments or complaints about the Publication Scheme or the handling of a request for information you should contact the Corporate Information Governance Officer, at the address given above.

If you are not satisfied with his response, your complaint will be processed through the city council's corporate complaints procedure. If you are still not satisfied, you should contact the Information Commissioner who has overall responsibility for issues arising from both the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act and can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

You can get all Portsmouth City Council information in large print, Braille or tape by calling: 023 9283 4092

**For translated information please call:
Bengali answerphone service: 023 9284 1651 or
Cantonese answerphone service: 023 9284 1652**

আপনি পোর্টসমাউথ সিটি কাউন্সিলের সকল তথ্যের অনুবাদ, বড় অক্ষরে অথবা কেসেটে পেতে পারেন। দয়াকরে বিস্তারিত জানার জন্য এই নাম্বারে যোগাযোগ করুন 023 9284 1651

樸茨茅斯市政府的一切資料，均備有翻譯本、大字書刊或映音帶，如有需要，請致電... 023 9284 1652