

Identity of the Public Authority

Eastbourne Borough Council (EBC) is a local authority situated on the South Coast of England in East Sussex. The Borough is predominantly urban in character and covers an area of 4,596 hectares. Eastbourne has a population of approximately 90,000 with around 400,000 staying visitors and approximately 1.5 million day visitors per year. As well as the prominent tourism industry, Eastbourne boasts a strong industrial sector and well established retail mix, all of which are growing and developing with the town.

Eastbourne Borough Council is responsible for business rates, Council Tax, elections, housing and housing benefits, landcharge searches, environmental health, planning, building regulations, and refuse collection. (The Authority is not responsible for social services, schools, highways, trading standards or libraries which are provided by East Sussex County Council.) EBC also owns and operates three theatres, an internationally renowned tennis centre and extremely popular conference facilities. The council has an annual budget of £14 million to run all its services and has around 500 full time employees. We are a modern Council led by a single party Cabinet.

The Council may be contacted by post, or in person at any of our main offices.

- **Town Hall, Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4UG**

Services Provided: Chief Executive, Communications, Democratic Services, Legal Services, Estates

- **68 Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4UH**

Services Provided: Amenities, Environmental Health, Housing Needs & Strategy (part), Planning, Regeneration, Strategic Development

- **1 Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4TW**

Services Provided: Audit, Community Finance, Financial Management, IT & E-Government, Personnel

- **College Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4JJ**

Services Provided: Arts & Heritage, Sport, Recreation & Leisure, Tourism Development

- **Housing Advice Centre, 61 Seaside Road, Eastbourne, BN21 3LQ**

Services Provided: Housing Management, Housing Needs & Strategy (part)

The Council may be contacted by telephone on (01323) 410000 or minicom on (01323) 415111.

The Council may also be contacted by email. The email address for general enquiries is enquiries@eastbourne.gov.uk

Information is also available from the Council's website www.eastbourne.gov.uk which contains information relating to the Council's services and can also accept on-line payments. For information relating to the town as a tourism resort and about our sport and leisure facilities we have a separate site www.eastbourne.org.

Background information

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) received Royal Assent on 30 November 2000. It gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities, sets out exemptions to that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities. A 'public authority' is defined in the Act, and includes but is not restricted to central and local government, non-departmental public bodies, the police, the National Health Service and schools, colleges and universities. Any person who who makes a request to a public authority for information must be informed whether the public authority holds that information and, subject to exemptions, supplied with that information.

Individuals already have the right of access to information about themselves under the Data Protection Act 1998. As far as public authorities are concerned, the Freedom of Information Act will extend this right to allow public access to all types of information held.

Every public authority will be required to adopt and maintain a publication scheme setting out the classes of information it holds, the manner in which it intends to publish the information, and whether a charge will be made for the information. The purpose of a scheme is to ensure a significant amount of information is available, without the need to make a specific request. Schemes are intended to encourage organisations to publish information more proactively and to develop a culture of greater openness.

The Publication Scheme

Eastbourne Borough Council's Publication Scheme is the Scheme into which we will routinely publish information that we hold. The scheme does not relate only to publications per se but to a variety of information/data types as held by EBC which may include databases, council reports, strategies and policies, guidance documents etc as well as information currently published on the web.

In deciding what information to publish we undertook a thorough audit of all the information held and sourced by EBC. We have always had an informal policy of openness and have looked upon introduction of the FOI as a means of formalising this. Our policy is that information should always be made available unless an exemption can reasonably be shown to apply. Whilst not an exhaustive list of exempt resources we will in the main refrain from publishing information which is:

- Staff Personnel Records which contain personal data
- Databases which contain personal data or may be commercially sensitive
- Records pertaining to legal proceedings, court summons etc
- Records and reports pertaining to the Council's Audit function
- All information relating to tenders and contracts
- Information relating to Emergency Plans whereby disclosure may prejudice emergency procedures
- Consumer Research which either contains personal data or commercially sensitive information collected for Sponsors or third party funders.

Our Scheme is divided into ten main classes and these are each then divided into a varying number of sub-categories in order to better organise and clarify the information contained within each class. The class structure has been partly based upon the structure of the eastbourne.gov.uk website with additional classes for information relating to the tourism function of the council not currently covered within the .gov site. Indeed much of the material available in this scheme will already be available through one of our websites as it is now

commonplace within EBC to publish new information straight to the web. The reason for basing the classes on the .gov website was that a lot of thought went into the creation of the structure for the site and statistics show that we currently have more than 10,500 unique visitors to the site each month with around 4,000 downloads taking place from these visits. These statistics verify the accessibility of the site structure and we therefore felt it best to build on this already tried and tested method of access to our information.

We are continually developing our website and a number of new sites (for young people and visitors) are currently under construction. We intend to continue to publish information to the web on an ongoing basis. It should be noted however, that this scheme is not, generally, retrospective and that information that is no longer held will no longer be available for publication.

There is no obligation for a public authority to provide information if the estimated cost of doing so would exceed an 'appropriate limit'. This limit will be set in secondary legislation sponsored by the Lord Chancellor's Department. In general, EBC does not intend to charge for the information included in its Publication Scheme that is directly accessible through its website. **However, it should be noted that levels of usage may force us to amend the scheme to provide for charging for sending out print versions of information freely available on the website. In some instances charges are applied for access to information whereby the Council have incurred a significant cost in the production of the information for publication or inspection.**

The Council's Publication Scheme will be available electronically on our website and internally on our Intranet. A hard copy version of the scheme will be made available in each of our five main building reception areas which are also staffed with full time receptionists with intranet access who can download documents for members of the public. We have also made an arrangement with our local public library for a hard copy version to be held on deposit.

Eastbourne Borough Council's Publication Scheme is managed on a daily basis by Simone Field, Acting Freedom of Information Manager who can be contacted at the Town Hall, Grove Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN21 4UG Tel: (01323) 415027.

Overall responsibility for the scheme, on behalf of the Council, is held by the Council's Chief Executive.

How to Obtain Information Listed in this Scheme

Where information is available on the web a hyperlink will direct you to the correct page. Where information is available as a document to download then the document icon will be available to you to click on and download. Where a resource is available by post, a request can be made in writing to the Head of Communications, Eastbourne Borough Council, Town Hall, Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 4UG. Where a charge applies, this is specified and payment should be included by way of a cheque or postal order, payable to Eastbourne Borough Council, – please do not send cash.

How to Request Information

If having searched the scheme you cannot find what you are looking for, you will be able to make a request for information under the Freedom Of Information Act 2000 from January 2005. Applications under the Freedom of Information Act should be put in writing to:-

Head of Communications

Town Hall, Grove Road

Eastbourne, East Sussex

BN21 4UG

Applications should specify that they are requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act. When requesting information please also include the following details:

- Your name and address
- The information or documents you would like to access
- The way you would like the information to be sent to you (for example as hard copy, via email or on a computer disk)

Prior to January 2005 we intend to frequently monitor and review our scheme. We intend to run a PR campaign to coincide with implementation of the scheme which as well as media publicity for the implementation of the scheme will also include a poster campaign and introduction of a feedback mechanism to support the scheme. Feedback from the scheme will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to establish improvements to our scheme.

Right to Appeal

In any case where a request for information under the individual right of access is denied, it may be possible to appeal against the decision. In the first instance we would want any such appeals to be referred for in-house review by our Chief Executive, but there will also be a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner (see below).

Information Commissioner

Responsibility for overseeing the operation of the Act rests with the Information Commissioner who is an independent public official responsible directly to Parliament. The first Information Commissioner, Elizabeth France, was appointed on 30 January 2001. As well as approving Publication Schemes and promoting compliance with the Act, the Commissioner has powers of enforcement.