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# SEDGEMOOR DISTRICT COUNCIL PUBLICATION SCHEME

# FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

Sedgemoor District Council
Bridgwater House
BRIDGWATER
Somerset
TA6 3AR

**Sedgemoor District Council**

Sedgemoor is situated in the south west of England, covering an area of 564 square kilometres. The Bristol Channel forms its northern boundary, the Quantock Hills cover the western part of the district and the Mendip Hills are in the northeast. The M5 motorway passes centrally through the district. It is mainly rural, with 13% of the area designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Moors and Levels being proposed as World Heritage Sites.

The largest settlements are Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea/Highbridge, Cheddar and North Petherton. There are 49,000 households and the population is 117,500 which rises during the holiday season, with 620,000 staying visitors.

The District Council provides a varied range of services to local residents, business and visitors. Some services we have a duty to provide and some are provided because the Council and the area's population feel they are important. The Council consists of 48 Councillors elected every four years, and the current political make up is 35 Conservatives, 10 Labour, 1 Liberal Democrat and 2 UKIP.

The area is split into 23 Wards, each electing one or more Councillors depending on the density of the ward's population. The structure is based around the 'Leader and Cabinet' scenario - the Cabinet / Executive is made up of the 'Leader of the Council' and seven Councillors whom the Leader appoints, and is responsible for most day-to-day decisions and work within the policy and budget framework set by the Council. Overview and Scrutiny Committees support the work of the Executive and the Council as a whole, playing an important role in monitoring the decisions of the Executive.

The priorities of the Council are Economic Growth, Efficiency and Value, Housing and Recycling and Carbon Reduction. The Council is committed to doing all it can to find efficiencies while keeping high standards and protecting the essential services the people of the district value.

Sedgemoor District Council is determined to keep Council Tax low. It aims to achieve this by being a customer focused, performance led organisation that delivers good public services, good value for money and effective leadership. To achieve this, the Council will ensure all of its activities are managed efficiently, effectively, ethically and in a way that makes best use of resources so as to ensure the best possible services for the local community.

The Council values its customers and puts them at the heart of everything it does. It is committed to listening to their views and aims to shape its services to their needs in a way that provides equality of access and equality of outcome.

As the authority discharges a wide range of services through its decision making processes a lot of information is held which may be of interest to residents. To facilitate that and to make information more readily available the authority has created this publication scheme in order to make available on a routine basis information that is held by the Authority.

**The Publication Scheme**

Our Freedom of Information (FOI) Publication Scheme is a guide to the information that we routinely publish. It is a description of the classes of information published.

Our guiding principles outline the way in which the council should operate. We are committed within these principles to provide clear information about what we do and how we do it. We therefore welcome the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and its purpose to promote greater openness by public authorities.

The Freedom of Information Act requires us to have a publication scheme in place that is approved by the Information Commissioner. We have adopted the model publication scheme as prepared and approved by the Information Commissioner.

The scheme is a guide to the information that we routinely publish. It is not a list of actual publications (this will change as other things are published) but rather it is a description of the classes or types of information published.

The scheme commits us:

- to proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information, including environmental information, which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below
- to specify the information which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below
- to proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line with the statements contained within this scheme
- to produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public
- to review and update on a regular basis the information the authority makes available under this scheme
- to produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available
- to make this publication scheme available to the public
- to publish any dataset held by the authority that has been requested, and any updated versions it holds, unless the authority is satisfied that it is not appropriate to do so; to publish the dataset, where reasonably practicable, in an electronic form that is capable of re-use; and, if any information in the dataset is a relevant copyright work and the public authority is the only owner, to make the information available for re-use under a specified licence. The term 'dataset' is defined in section 11(5) of the Freedom of Information Act. The terms 'relevant copyright work' and 'specified licence' are defined in section 19(8) of that Act

The publication scheme is intended to place individuals in a position where information held by the Authority is made available routinely so that citizens may access that information through the resources already published under this scheme rather than having to make individual requests for information.

**Classes of information**

The publication scheme specifies seven classes of information, under which most information we hold falls into. These are:

1. who we are and what we do
2. what we spend and how we spend it
3. what our priorities are and how we are doing
4. how we make decisions
5. our policies and procedures
6. lists and registers
7. services provided by the council

**How are they published?**

With a few exceptions our publications can be downloaded from this website.

The Records Manager is responsible for maintaining the scheme on a day to day basis. If you have difficulty in finding what you are looking for, please contact us.

**How much do publications cost?**

All publications on our website may be freely downloaded unless otherwise indicated. Most printed publications are available free of charge, but a charge may be made at rates decided from time to time for others.

**Information that we will not publish under the scheme**

A great deal of information that is held by us is personal and private to individuals. This includes our employees and former employees and we will not publish it. Individuals have rights under the Data Protection Act to seek information relating to their own circumstances. A separate application will need to be made to us under the provisions of this legislation.

Information which is exempt from disclosure or inspection under other legislation or would infringe someone else's rights may not be published. Wherever possible we have drawn attention to those classes which may contain information which cannot be published.

The Freedom of Information Act and publication scheme does not limit other rights that people have to information.

**Where can I find the publication scheme?**

The publication scheme is available on our website and in our offices.

In order to assist access to information both through this publication scheme and individual requests the Authority has appointed the Records Manager as the officer responsible for Freedom of Information issues and ensuring that the ongoing responsibilities of the Authority under the Freedom of Information Act are met. The Records Manager is also responsible for

the maintenance of the publication scheme and ensuring that it is updated regularly and to that end it is anticipated that it will be reviewed each year.  The information held on Sedgemoor District Council's publication scheme relates only to Sedgemoor District Council and its publication scheme will not make available information held by other public bodies. Sedgemoor District Council will publish this document by making it available in hard copy from Bridgwater House.  The Authority will also publish a copy of this scheme on the internet.

**Complaints**

Any complaints about the scheme should, in the first event, be made to the Monitoring Officer at the address given on the front of this scheme. Copies of the Authority's complaint procedure are also available at that address and on the website www.sedgemoor.gov.uk You may contact the Information Commissioner at the following address:

<div align="center">

The Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
WILMSLOW
Cheshire
SK9 5AF.

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**Appendix**

1.  Who we are and what we do – for example

Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts.
Council constitution
Council democratic structure
Council directorate structure
Location and opening times of the Council office
Currently elected councillors' information and contact details
Contact details for all customer-facing departments
Most recent election results
Relationships with other authorities

2.  What we spend and how we spend it – for example

Statement of Accounts.
Financial regulations
Senior officers' pay and Members' expenses
Publish transactions over £500.
Open Committee reports which details financial information
Rent Set
Tax Set
HRA Business Plan (includes Revenue and Capital)

3. What our priorities are and how we are doing – for example

Strategies and plans, performance indicators.
Annual reports
The Local Plan
Annual Report on Council Performance
Internal and external organisation performance reviews including external audits
Strategies developed in partnership with other authorities
Economic development action plan
The Notice of Key Decisions
Capital strategy
External auditors' reports
Service standards

4. How we make decisions – for example

Decision-making processes and records of decisions.
Reports, Agendas and Minutes
Major policy proposals and decisions
Public consultations

5. Our policies and procedures – for example

Policies and procedures for conducting council business
Policies and procedures for delivering our services
Pay policy statement
Policies and procedures about the recruitment and employment of staff
Records management and data protection policies
Charging regimes and policies

6. Lists and registers – for example

Public registers and registers held as public records
Asset registers and information asset register
Register of councillors' financial and other interests
Planning On-line
Building Control On-line

7. Services provided by the council – for example

Information about the services the council provides including leaflets, guidance and newsletters.
Regulatory and licensing responsibilities
Services for which the Council is entitled to recover a fee, together with those fees
Advice and guidance
Media releases
Election information