

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION



HOW TO REQUEST INFORMATION HELD BY SEDGEMOOR DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of information Act (FOI) gives you the right to ask Sedgemoor District Council for any recorded information that it holds. When we receive an FOI request, unless we are exempt from providing the information, the Council is required to:

- Confirm or deny that it holds the information;
- If it holds the information, to supply you with it.

If you request environmental information, we will deal with this under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

Wherever reasonable, we will try to provide it in the format you choose. Possible formats are:

- Paper copy;
- Electronic copy (e.g. by e-mail);
- Summary of the information;
- Access to inspect the documents.

We will also make every effort to meet your needs if you have a disability which means you need the information in another format (e.g. Braille, audiotape), or where your language is not English.

I would like some information – what do I have to do?

Much of the information held by the Council is already publicly available:

- On our website;
- In one of our public libraries;
- In one of our publications or leaflets;
- As a public register available for inspection (such as the Electoral Register, or Planning applications).

If you ask for personal information that the Council holds about you , we will deal with this as a subject access request under the Data Protection Act.

If your request is for any other information that is not already published, please put your request in writing and:

Hand it in at Bridgwater House, King Square, Bridgwater, FAO the Records Manager **or** send your e-mail to foi@sedgemoor.gov.uk

You should provide us with:

- your name
- address
- phone number and/or e-mail (this is useful if we need to clarify the request) explain exactly what information it is that you require.

Is there any information I cannot get?

You may not be able to get the information you request if it falls within one of these categories:

- It is a repeat request that you have previously made to us.
- We consider it to be a vexatious request.
- The information is already otherwise available. If this exemption applies, we will tell you how you can get hold of the information.
- Where we are not allowed to give it to you by law.
- If it is someone's personal information. If you request **your** personal information, we will deal with this under the Data Protection Act.
- Where we intend to publish the information in the future.
- Where the information would prejudice the local economy.
- Where it forms part of an on-going investigation.
- Where it would prejudice the prevention or detection of crime, where we are considering taking regulatory action or investigating the cause of an accident.
- Where it would prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs.
- Where it would endanger the health or safety of any individual.
- Where the information is subject to legal professional privilege.
- Where it would prejudice the commercial interests of Homes in Sedgemoor, or another organisation or person.
- Information provided to the organisation where there is a reasonable expectation of confidentiality.

If we decide that we cannot disclose the information you have requested we will explain the reasons for our decision.

How much will it cost?

We will deal with most requests free of charge. However, if the request takes us more than 18 hours to satisfy, we may make a charge or we may refuse the request. We may also charge you for the cost of copying, printing, postage or translating the information where this is significant. We will tell you about any charges before we start work on your request.

How quickly will I get the information?

We will normally respond to your request within 20 working days. However, if it is a very complex or extensive request we may need to take longer. If this is the case, we will let you know.

What can I do if I am not happy with the decision on my request?

If you are not happy with the outcome of your request, you can make a complaint through the Council's complaints procedure. If you are still not happy after you have exhausted this procedure, you can write to the Information Commissioner, whose details are below.

Where can I get further information?

The Information Commissioner is charged with ensuring that all public authorities comply with the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts. Their website provides a lot of background information and guidance on these two pieces of legislation. You can find them at www.ico.org.uk