



LONDON BOROUGH OF HOUNSLOW (1)  
HOUNSLOW HOMES LIMITED (2)

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION  
PUBLICATION SCHEME

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# London Borough of Hounslow: Freedom of Information Publication Scheme

## 1.0 Introduction to the Freedom of Information Act.

- 1.1 The Freedom of Information Act applies to a wide-range of both National and Local public organisations including all tiers of local authorities. The Act gives a right of access to all types of information held by the Council and places obligations on authorities as to the manner and timing of disclosure; but there are also important exemptions where the need to maintain confidentiality is justified.
- 1.2 The public already enjoys extensive access to information which is held by local authorities, for example, under the Local Government Act access to information requirements, and under Data Protection Act rules. Local government legislation also imposes widespread obligations to provide public access to Council policies and decisions, financial records and statutory registers which are maintained by local Councils. The Freedom of Information Act supplements all of these requirements.
- 1.3 The Freedom of Information Act comes into operation in two stages. First, after February 2003 the Council is required to maintain a Publication Scheme setting out the classes of information which it already publishes or intends to publish. The scheme must also indicate the manner in which information is to be published and whether or not a charge will be made for access to the information. Broadly, the purpose of the Publication Scheme is to ensure that large amounts of information which are or could be made available routinely are readily accessible without the need for any specific request.
- 1.4 The second stage of these requirements will come into force after January 2005. After that date the Council must respond to any written request for information and must supply copies of any information which is held – subject to any exemptions and to the right to impose reasonable charges.

## 2.0 About Hounslow Council.

- 2.1 Hounslow Council is a multi-purpose West London Borough and is responsible for a range of services including:

**Social Services**

**Planning**

**Education**

**Street Care**

## **Refuse Collection**

### **Public Protection (including Trading Standards, Food Standards and Licensing).**

The Council has also developed significant partnering arrangements in respect of **Housing** services with Hounslow Homes Limited. **Leisure, Libraries and other cultural services** are provided through Community Initiative Partnerships.

- 2.2 Further information about the full range of these services is available through the Council's website at [www.Hounslow.gov.uk](http://www.Hounslow.gov.uk).
- 2.3 The Council is comprised of sixty elected Members. Under a new Constitution, adopted in May 2002, the Council operates with a Council Leader and Executive (or Cabinet) which together are responsible for promoting policy and implementing all significant decisions. Other important elements in how the Council operates include Scrutiny Committees and Panels, an Area-based committee system, Sustainable Development Committee (for key planning decisions) and a Standards Committee. Further details about these arrangements can be found in the Constitution which is also on the Council's website.
- 2.4 Within the area of the Council there is a resident population of some 209,000 with a broad ethnic mix. The Council has gross expenditure of over £450m in the provision of services. The Council is one of the largest employers in the area with over 7,500 full and part-time staff including teachers.

### **3.0 Hounslow's commitment to accessible information.**

- 3.1 The Council is committed to the principle of open and accountable government. Structures and procedures are already in place under the new Constitution to ensure that full information is made available as to how decisions are made and who takes those decisions. The Council's scrutiny arrangements allow all backbench members, outside the Executive, to participate in the examination of decisions. Through the Area Committee system all Members of the Council are enabled to consider the provision of services which affect people locally.
- 3.2 In addition the Council has had a long-standing tradition of consultation with the community, extending far beyond any narrow legal requirements. The introduction of the Freedom of Information Act, and of this initial Publication Scheme, is an opportunity for the Council to consider and explain the range of information which it already publishes, what further information can be made available, and the means by which information is made accessible.
- 3.3 The contents of the Publication Scheme will be kept under continuous review. The Council will continue to add to and to up date the classes and kinds of information which are made available under this Scheme. As new services are developed or existing service provision changes then details will be provided including details of how information relevant to those services may be accessed.

3.4 In the preparation of this Scheme and in affording routine access to information held by the Authority the Council has had and will continue to have regard to the wider public interest in maintaining open and accessible local government. Whilst the Council will endeavour to maximise the nature and amount of information available under the Scheme and in its responses to individual requests after 2005, some information will necessarily need to be restricted - as the law allows. Examples of this will include sensitive personal information and information where there is a genuine need to maintain commercial confidentiality.

#### **4.0 How the publication scheme is organised.**

4.1 The purpose of the Scheme is to set out the broad **classes** of information which will be made routinely accessible after February 2003. Information will be published in a variety of printed format. All information described is available in paper format but eventually it is expected that most of this information will be available via the Council's website. The website already contains a great deal of useful information about how the Council operates, decisions which have been made, and gives access to information about the range of services which the Council provides.

4.2 The broad **classes of information** are as follows.

- The Council and its Constitution
- The Council's Policy Framework
- Council Performance
- Financial information
- Service information

4.3 The Annex to this Scheme gives more detail about each class and what information might routinely be published under each heading. Within each class heading there are references to categories of information within the specific class as well as references to some individual documents of significance. The Publication Scheme is not meant to contain an exhaustive list of all information or every document that may be made available under the Freedom of Information Act or related legislation as set out above. It points to the broad classes of information under which the Council will routinely publish relevant information. Information may not be made available if it is subject to any of the prescribed exemptions or if it is impracticable to locate or retrieve information (for example by reason of difficulty in identification or passage of time).

4.4 Under each class or category of information the Council has indicated exactly where the reader may expect to locate relevant material.

4.5 Where routine information is not specifically referred to or identified under any class within the Publication Scheme the Council will make every effort to assist enquirers; and where it is reasonably practical to do so then information will be made available by every appropriate means.

#### **5.0 Information from Partners.**

5.1 The Council has entered into partnering arrangements for two important local services. **Hounslow Homes** is a private company wholly owned by the Council and provides, principally, management and maintenance services for the Council's housing tenants and leaseholders. The Publication Scheme includes as a separate category within the Service Information Class routine information relating to housing services where such information is produced or held by Hounslow Homes.

5.2 In a similar way, the Council has entered into a partnership with **Community Initiative Partnerships** to provide library, sport, leisure and cultural services in Hounslow. With the co-operation of its partner (which is a private company at arms length from the Council) relevant information has been identified in the Service Information Class.

## **6.0 Access to the Publication Scheme.**

6.1 This Scheme is available as a printed document and can be obtained from principal Council offices and the offices of Hounslow Homes and Community Initiative Partnerships. It is also made available in the principal libraries and the main reception desk at the Council's Civic Centre.

6.2 The document can be viewed through the Council's website. A summary of the document will also be made available in Braille and in the principal ethnic languages used in the Borough's community.

## **7.0 Charges.**

7.1 The Council's intention is to continue to make information which is currently available free of charge accessible without payment. Information which is accessible on the Council's website is also available without charge.

7.2 In pursuing its objective of open government the Council believes that much of the information which it provides to the public should be provided without charge. However some printed material is expensive to produce or to copy and in appropriate cases such costs will be offset by reasonable charges.

## **8.0 Help and assistance.**

8.1 There are numerous contact points within the Council where assistance may be given to obtain routine information published this Scheme. The Council's website also provides names and contact numbers for particular kinds of assistance.

8.2 Under each class of information, and for particular service - specific information, contact points and telephone numbers have been included at the end of each class or category.

8.3 However in case of difficulty in identifying the source or description of information which might be held, or the location of such information, then any of the following will try to assist.

1. Corporate Communications and Public Relations – telephone number 0208 583-2180.
2. The Council's Customer Relations Officer (Bob Wearing, Tel No. 0208 583-2245) [If the information is service specific then a direct approach to the Customer Services Officer in each of the service departments can be made directly].
3. The Council Monitoring Officer – Mike Smith Borough Solicitor, Tel No. 0208 583-2022.

#### **9.0 Comments on the Publication Scheme.**

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer is generally responsible for compliance with the Freedom of Information Act requirements and will regularly review the maintenance of the Publication Scheme.

9.2 Any comments, criticisms or suggestions as to how the Scheme might be improved or access to information widened would be very welcome. Please contact:-

Mike Smith, Borough Solicitor,  
Civic Centre, Lampton Road, Hounslow, Middlesex TW3 4DN:  
Tel. No. 0208 583-2022  
Fax No. 0208 583-2055  
E-mail contact: [michael.smith@hounslow.gov.uk](mailto:michael.smith@hounslow.gov.uk).

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT**

### **CLASSES OF INFORMATION**

#### **Class 1 – The Council and its Constitution**

##### **1. The Constitution**

The core Constitution:

- Terms of reference and membership of committees, panels and outside bodies.
- Rules of Procedure, Financial and Contract Regulations.
- Arrangements for delegated decisions.

##### **2. Members of the Council**

- Details of elected Members, the parties and wards they represent.
- Ward surgery arrangements and contact points.
- The Member Allowances Scheme.
- The public registers of Members' interests and gifts and hospitality.
- Record of Member attendance at meetings.
- The Member Codes of Conduct

##### **3. Council decision-making**

- Calendars of meetings:
- Arrangements for access to meetings and speaking protocols.
- Agendas, reports and minutes of meetings (except confidential or exempt material).
- The Executive Forward Plan.

##### **4. Employment Information**

- Chief Officer and departmental structures.
- The Employee Code of Conduct.
- Service-wide conditions of service
- Policies and process concerning equality of opportunity, discipline, health and safety, and fair treatment.
- Workforce profiles.

##### **5. Complaints and Appeals**

- Corporate complaints procedures.

- Access to the Ombudsman, Standards Board for England and the Council's external auditor.
- Departmental complaints procedures.
- Access to statutory complaints and appeals procedures.
- Information concerning local appeal arrangements for housing and education matters.
- Annual report on Ombudsman complaints.

**Contact Address:** Civic Centre Reception, Lampton Road, Hounslow

**Contact Telephone:** Members Services – 0208 583-2245

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## **Class II – The Policy Framework**

1. This Class includes the Council's Pledges to the Community and all corporate or service policies and strategies approved by the Council or the Executive.
2. Key policies form part of the Council's policy and budget framework and are referred to in the Council's Constitution. These include statutory plans or policies such as:
  - Hounslow Community Plan
  - Crime Reduction Strategy
  - Unitary Development Plan
  - Annual Library Plan
3. Other policies are formulated to guide the provision of services to the community, including:
  - Hounslow Cultural Strategy
  - Voluntary Sector Strategy
  - Hounslow Community Buildings Strategy
  - Departmental Business Plans e.g Health Improvement Unit and the Translation Unit.
4. The above policies are illustrative of the many strategies and plans produced by the Council. These can be accessed either through the Council's web-site or on paper. The policies which are directly related to particular services may be obtained from the appropriate service department.

**Contact Address:** Civic Centre Reception, Lampton Road, Hounslow

**Contact Telephone:** Policy Office – 0208 583-2537

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## **Class III – Council’s Performance**

1. **Best Value –**
  - Annual Best Value Performance Plan and Summary
  - Best Value Performance Indicators.
  - Best Value Reviews – Output reports.
  
2. **Comprehensive Performance Assessment –**
  - Hounslow Council’s self-assessment submission
  - Audit Commission C.P.A. report.
  
3. **Overview and Scrutiny reports.**
  - Annual Report of Hounslow’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee
  - Output reports of Scrutiny Panels (N.B. these may contain exempt or confidential information).
  
4. **Public Service Agreements.**

**Contact Address:** Civic Centre Reception, Lampton Road, Hounslow

**Contact Telephone:** Policy Office (for Best Value and Performance) 0208 583-2537

Scrutiny Office (for Scrutiny Reports) 0208 583-2462

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## **Class IV – Council Financial Information**

1. Budget Information. This includes:
  - Annual Revenue and Capital Budget. \*
  - Annual Capital Strategy
  - Report on the Council Tax Base
  - Report on Council Tax setting, Capital Budget and Treasury Management. \*
  - Council Tax information leaflet.
2. Hounslow Council Statement of Accounts.
3. External Audit Management Letter.
4. Asset Management Plan.
5. Treasury Policy Statement.
6. Housing benefit and Council tax benefit information leaflets.
7. Valuation Lists for Council tax and National Non-Domestic Rate.

**Contact Address:** Civic Centre Reception, Lampton Road, Hounslow

**Contact Telephone:** Chief Accountants Office 0208 583-2425

**NB** \* These papers may include exempt or confidential material

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## **Class V – Service Information**

### **CATEGORY A – Community Information – General**

- A.1 The A-Z of Council services held on the Council’s web-site giving access to information about all Council services.
- A.2 Council Newsletters including Your Hounslow, Voluntary Times Newsletter, and Community Safety Network Newsletter.
- A.3 Hounslow Council press releases.
- A.4 Assistance to the Voluntary Sector, for example, including the Hounslow Voluntary Sector Compact; the Funding Guide; Hounslow Community Directory
- A.5 Welfare Benefits – information explaining this Council service giving welfare and money advice.
- A.6 Information on registering Births, deaths and marriages.

**Contact Address:** Civic Centre Reception, Lampton Road, Hounslow

**Contact Telephone:** Corporate Communication and Public Relations 0208 583-2180

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**CATEGORY B - Planning, Street Management and Public Protection**

B.1. Planning and Building Control.

The Council will provide information to include statutory plans and supplementary planning guidance; town centre strategies and planning briefs; and planning agreements. This category will also include policy and guidance in respect of building control matters.

B.2. Street Management: examples of information include street maintenance policies and programmes, including priorities.

B.3 Business Regulation – this will include information on the licensing of business activity and on relevant fees.

B.4 Environmental Safety – to include Council policy on health and safety enforcement.

B.5 Pollution and Animal Control. The Council will make available information on services, for example, to include noise complaints, pest control, stray animals. The Customer Charter and Annual Report of this team are also available.

B.6 Drainage – information includes the Flood Defence policy statement; and Thames Water Utilities maps of sewers.

B.7 Waste Management and Contaminated Land. The Contaminated Land Strategy.

B.8 General. The Council also holds under this category numerous registers such as the Bridges Register, Planning Register and Register of Landfill Sites, all of which are publicly available. Information produced by national or regional agencies in respect of, for example, census data, National Street Gazetteer, National Land and Property Gazetteer is also available but may be subject to copyright.

**Contact Address:** Planning and Street Management Reception, Civic Centre,  
Lampton Road, Hounslow

**Contact Telephone:** Customer Services 0208 583-5260/5270/5300

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**CATEGORY C - Social Services and Health Partnerships.**

- C.1 Advice and Information for service users and carers where the Council has responsibility for Children and Families or under Community Care. Information will include guidance on the nature, level and quality of services available; how to access services; and how to complain.
- C.2 Departmental Policies and Procedures. Information on the Council's approach to service provision and procedures which staff will follow.
- C.3 Strategy and Implementation. This includes information on service planning and delivery including
- Provision for particular customer groups and joint working with other agencies
  - The approach to new legal requirements
  - Equalities issues
- C.4 Customer consultation – results of customer surveys and consultation, including resultant service development.

**Contact Address:** Civic Centre Reception, Lampton Road, Hounslow

**Contact Telephone:** Quality Assurance Team: 0208 583-3018

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## **CATEGORY D - Housing Services**

**Note:** Hounslow Council provides housing services in partnership with Hounslow Homes which is an arms length company. Broadly, Hounslow Homes is responsible for direct provision of housing management and maintenance services. The Council provides strategic direction together with direct services for homelessness, private sector housing and technical services.

### **PART 1 – Hounslow Council Services.**

D.1 Housing Policy information. This includes, for example, the Housing Investment Programme, Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, and the Housing Capital Programme.

D.2 Service information – includes advisory leaflets e.g on homelessness, housing need and allocation, grants, and energy efficiency.

D.3 Private sector housing. Information in respect of:-  
Housing grants ● care and repair standards ● landlord accreditation ● houses in multiple occupation ● private sector leasing ● private sector housing survey.

D.4 Complaints and Appeals – the Housing Customer Care Statement ● reviewing homelessness and allocation decisions ● housing grants appeals.

D.5 Service Protocols – concerning joint working with Social Services and Probation Services ● on housing of sex offenders and potentially dangerous offenders ● for dealing with unauthorised encampments.

**Contact Address:** Civic Centre Reception, Lampton Road, Hounslow

**Contact Telephone:** Housing Strategy: 0208 583-3816/3757

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**PART 2 – Hounslow Homes services**

- D.6 Company information – including its constitution; details of Board Membership and Senior Officer structure; the Board Member Code of Conduct; the Annual Report and Accounts; and reports and minutes of Board meetings (excepting confidential matters).
- D.7 Policy and Strategy – including the Foundation for Excellence Plan and the annual Delivery Plan.
- D.8 Financial information – summaries of the approved housing revenue account budget and approved capital programme.
- D.9 Service information. The Company provides a range of leaflets about management and maintenance services; monitoring information; organisation charts; accessibility including translation facilities; and complaints procedures.

**Contact Address:** Housing Reception, St. Catherines House, 2 Hanworth Road, Feltham, Middlesex

**Contact Telephone:** 0208 583-3702

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## **CATEGORY E – Leisure Services (Community Initiative Partnerships)**

**Note:** Hounslow Council provides a full range of leisure, sport and cultural services in conjunction with its partner Community Initiative Partnerships (CIP) which is an arms length company. The following information is held and obtainable from CIP. The Council's Department for Lifelong Learning, Leisure and Cultural Services gives strategic direction.

E.1 Company Information – includes, for example, details of the Company structure, Board Members, Senior Officers, Annual Report and Accounts.

E.2 Service Information. This includes information on services managed by CIP including:

- activities, events and programmes
- service contacts, opening times and charges
- performance management information
- user and resident surveys
- database of assets, property and collections
- the regulation of services e.g. by service standards and local byelaws.
- comments and complaints procedures.

**Contact Address:** CIP Group, Centrespace, Treaty Centre, High Street, Hounslow

**Contact Telephone:** 0845 456-2800

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**CATEGORY F – Lifelong Learning, Leisure and Cultural Services**

- F.1 Departmental Policies and Procedures. Information on the Council’s approach to service provision and procedures.
- F.2 Advice and Information for Service Users – includes advisory leaflets and brochures for all customer groups e.g admissions, adult education classes, grants, examination data.
- F.3 Service Planning and Delivery – information on monitoring and evaluation of services, structure charts, equalities issues, including accessibility to translation and interpretation facilities.
- F.4 Complaints and Appeals – the LLL & C Service complaints procedures e.g. exclusion appeals, admission appeals.

**Contact Address** Civic Centre Reception, Lampton Road, Hounslow

**Contact Telephone:** 0208 583-2640

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