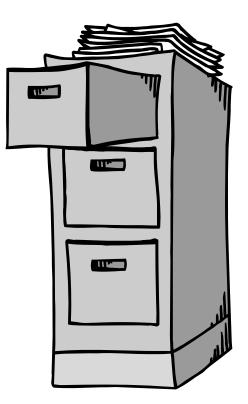


DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

STAFF DOCUMENTS SERIES

DATA PROTECTION



DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

DATA PROTECTION AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The Council makes use of a variety of resources in the course of managing and providing services. These include, staff, finance, office accommodation and equipment and information. As a public sector organisation the Council is required to be accountable for the manner in which resources are utilised.

Accurate, timely and appropriately secure information is an important resource that provides the Council with a record of its decisions and activities.

Because we are a public service body there is an expectation that we will be open and make information available in the public domain. Equally, we have a duty to ensure that certain information is held securely with access being provided only to those who have a genuine need.

There are two primary pieces of legislation that impact on the manner in which the Council manages information. These are the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act, 2000.

The Town Clerk is responsible for administering both Acts within the Council. At a national level, the Information Commissioner is responsible for ensuring that the legislation is implemented and adhered to.

Data Protection Act 1998

The Act is concerned with protecting personal information that organisations obtain in the course of undertaking their business. To comply the Council is expected to:

- notify the Information Commissioner about the reason(s) why personal information is processed and stored;
- adopt the eight data protection principles set out in the Act;
- adhere to the 'fair processing' code;
- inform data subjects of their rights;
- respond to requests from individuals who want access to information we hold about them; and
- ensure that information is securely managed and not accessed or passed to unauthorised persons.

The Council has notified the Information Commissioner about all the personal information it processes and stores. Members are covered by this notification if they are accessing information provided to them by the Council. However, if you keep and use personal information about people in your Ward whether electronically or manually you are required to 'notify' the Information Commissioner independently. This currently costs £35 per annum.

Freedom of Information Act 2000

This Act became fully effective in January 2005. To comply, the Council is expected to:

- provide the public with simple access to all information that is identified as being within the public domain;
- implement and manage a Publication Scheme that catalogues this information;

- respond to information requests within 20 working days of receipt if the information required falls outside the Publication Scheme catalogue;
- apply any appropriate exemptions after undertaking a 'public interest' test; and
- adopt codes of practice as issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Information Commissioner.

The Council has complied with the first phase of the Act in that a Publication Scheme and Catalogue of information that is in the 'public domain' has been produced and made available with effect from 28 February 2003.