



**Freedom of Information Policy
and associated framework**

MAY 2004

A : Policy Statement

The Council will ensure that:

- 1.1 It has appropriate procedures and practices in place.
- 1.2 It monitors and reviews the Freedom of Information process periodically and ensures that procedures are communicated appropriately.
- 1.3 It implements and maintains the Council's Publication Scheme.
- 1.4 It maintains a principle of openness in relation to contracts & tendering, and ensures that confidential clauses are drafted to reflect this.
- 1.5 Confidentiality clauses are used only in limited circumstances.
- 1.6 All staff are aware of their responsibilities under the Act.
- 1.7 Regular audits are carried out to ensure that all appropriate information is included in the publication scheme.
- 1.8 That a scheme coordinator is appointed.

B : Background to Policy Statement

1. What is the Freedom of Information Act?

The Freedom of Information 2000 received Royal Assent on the 30th November 2000. The Act gives the public a general right to all types of information held by public authorities, and puts in place requirements for public authorities to disclose information where no exemptions apply.

The Act comes fully in to force on the 1st January 2005 and from this date anyone will be able to make a request for information. Requests must be in written format although email will be acceptable.

Key points under the new Act are:-

- that the enquirer has the right to be told whether the information exists
- and that the information requested (subject to any exemptions) be released within 20 working days and where possible in the manner requested.

2. What is a Publication Scheme?

The publication scheme is a complete guide to the information routinely published by the Council. The scheme is not aimed to be a comprehensive list of actual publications (although many are included) since this will change over time, rather it is

a guide to the information the Council holds.

In order to show this, the information is set in classes. Classes have been defined to cover specific areas for which the Council has responsibility.

Information may be contained within more than one class, This is to reflect how customers may interpret the information.

Some classes of information will include elements required by existing legislation.

Whilst this information is not held by the Council specifically, it is included to assist in providing ease of access to customers. Those items included but not part of the scheme will be annotated as not being part of the scheme. All publications and information will be accessible unless they carry an exemption. Reasons for exemptions will be clearly indicated and can be challenged by contacting the scheme co-ordinator.

2.1. Blaby District Councils Publication Scheme

The publication scheme is a complete guide to the information routinely published by Blaby District Council. It is not a list of the actual publications, since this will change as other things are published but rather it is a description of the classes or types of information published. A Class could be a single document or reference to the material available under that class.

From 1st January 2005 the Freedom of Information Act will allow the public access to much more information held by Blaby District Council, whether that information is published or not.

3. Exempt Information

Some material within the classes of the publication scheme may contain exempt information as listed under the Act. Information will be considered exempt if it is

- accessible to the requester via other means
- intended for future publication
- related to matters of national security
- related to defence
- related to investigations and proceedings conducted by public authorities
- audit functions
- prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs
- related to Health & Safety
- Environmental Information
- personal information - see Data Protection Act 1998
- information provided in confidence

This list is not exhaustive and other exemptions may apply.

4. Provision of Information and Charging

Information will be provided in two ways:

Information that can be downloaded from Blaby District Council's website will be free of charge.

Information that is requested from the Council may be liable to printing and other costs. It is the Council's aim that as much information as possible is provided freely via the website.