

Home > Your Council > Transparency and open data > Data protection > Information requests corporate charging policy

Information requests corporate charging policy

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Other mobile browsers – tap the browser’s options menu (usually 3 dots or lines) and select ‘find on page’ from the options.

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This will open a search box on the page. Type the word you are looking for in the search box and press enter. The word will then be highlighted wherever it appears in the guidance. Use the navigation in the search box to move to the next word found.

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CTRL + P on your keyboard (Command + P on a Mac)

You have an option to print the entire page, or select a page range.

This charging policy defines Blackpool Councils’ policy on charging for requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and will also be used as the basis for any calculations for dealing with requests under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). It will be applied throughout the council.

The policy incorporates the ‘Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004’.

What will we charge for

While the council does not want to be seen to put obstacles in the way of accessing information, larger or more complex requests may require a fee to be calculated and a fees notice issued (see [Calculating charges](#)). The council will charge for:

- Information requested that is priced in the publication scheme.
- Information which has a charge imposed by another enactment or regulation
- Large or complex requests where a fees notice is issued
- [Disbursements](#) over £25. This is the point at which we will start to charge

What we will not charge for

The council will not charge for:

- Requests received for information already available on the council’s websites or via the publication scheme where there is no charge indicated
- Requests that council staff can easily answer without the need for extensive location and retrieval effort
- Information that has been released previously following a request, and where a copy of this is maintained
- Providing information in an alternative format if the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) or the Race Relations Amendment Act

applies, unless the original document was a priced publication. In this instance, the charge for the alternative format will not exceed the cost of original publication

- Additional translation charges for supplying information in a different language (where English is not the first language). Where the original document is already priced, this cost for a translated version will not exceed the cost of the original publication

What are the charges?

The fee regulations set out what charges are permissible for information requests. These charges are currently defined as two elements, prescribed costs and disbursements.

Appropriate limit

The regulations define an ‘appropriate limit’. This is the limit for the estimated or calculated prescribed costs. For local government, this limit is currently £450.

Prescribed costs

These consist of the time taken to:

- Determine whether the council holds the information requested
- Locate the information or document that may contain the information
- Retrieve the information or document that may contain the information
- Extract the information from a document

Where the estimated or calculated prescribed costs are under £450, there will be no charge other than the cost of the disbursements (reproducing the information, postage etc. - see ‘[disbursements](#)’ below).

Where the estimated or calculated prescribed costs are over £450, the council may refuse to comply with the request. In these instances, the council will discuss with the applicant whether they wish to modify their request.

In exceptional cases, the council may comply with requests where the estimated or calculated prescribed costs are over £450. In these instances, the council will charge for the full, prescribed costs based on the calculation method and rate shown in ‘calculating charges’, and the disbursements.

Disbursements

These consist of:

- The cost of informing the applicant whether the information is held
- Communicating the information to the application
 - Meeting the preference expressed by the applicant as to the format of communicating the information e.g. CD-Rom, paper copy
 - Reproducing any document containing the information
 - Postage and other forms of transmitting the information

Calculating charges

For larger and more complex requests, the council will calculate the charges using the following:

- Determine the estimated time required for the appropriate limit costs (determining if we hold the information, locating, retrieving and extracting this)
- Multiply by £25 (the hourly rate defined within the regulations)
- Determine the charge for disbursements
 - This will generally be the actual costs of photocopying, printing, postage, faxing, however, it may be necessary to estimate some elements
 - Any other costs relating to supplying the information to the applicant

The council’s standard FOI photocopying charge in force at the time of the request (15p per single or double sided copy as at August 2005) will be applied for A4 mono photocopying across the council.

Fees for photocopying of larger sizes and colour copying will be charged in line with the council’s printing charges in force at that time.

Aggregated or campaign requests

These are two or more requests, received within a period of 60 consecutive working days, and made by one applicant or different applicants, who appear to be acting in concert (acting together) or in pursuance of a campaign.

The ‘appropriate limit’ costs of complying with the individual requests will be aggregated. If the total amount is found to exceed £450, the council will not be obliged to comply with any of the requests.

Notifying charges - Fees notice

The decision to apply costs has been taken in the interests of council resources..

- Where charges apply, we will notify the charge to the applicant before doing any charged work,by issuing a fees notice
- When we notify the charge, we will offer to give advice on how to change the request to reduce the charge
- Where there is a significant difference between the estimated and the actual charge, we will notify the applicant
- Where charges apply, we will require payment before compiling and supplying information
- If payment is not received within 3 months of the fees notice being issued, the request will be treated as having lapsed

Review of the charging policy

This policy will be reviewed annually. Changes made to the policy will be dependent upon the number and cost of information requests processed.

[↑ Back to top](#)

Blackpool Council

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