

Enterprise Cheshire + Warrington

Freedom of Information Policy

Reference: ECW005
Version: 5
Revised: March 2025
Review Date: March 2026

Introduction

The Freedom of Information Act was fully implemented in January 2005 and is intended to provide greater access to all types of recorded information and imposes obligations to disclose information, subject to a range of exemptions.

This policy ensures the easy, appropriate and timely retrieval of information and the framework through which this effective management can be achieved and audited.

Scope

The implementation of this policy applies to all recorded information held by Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW). The purpose of the policy is to ensure that the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act are adhered to and in particular that:

- any appropriate published information about ECW is made available to the public as a matter of course through the Publication Scheme
- other appropriate information not included in the Publication Scheme is available on request and such a request is dealt with in a timely manner (refer to Specific Requests for Information for details); and
- in cases where information is covered by an exemption, consideration is given as to whether or not the information should be released.

Relationship with Existing Policies and Legislation

This policy has been developed and will be implemented within the context of other ECW policies, procedures and national legislation.

Publication Scheme

As good practice ECW has produced a Publication Scheme which sets out what information it would release as a matter of course and whether or not this information will be made available free of charge or on payment of a fee.

The Publication Scheme below specifies the classes of information available from the ECW website or in hard copy, upon request:

- Organisational information
- Financial information – project expenditure, tendering and procurement and contracts
- Strategy and development
- Internal criteria, policies and procedures
- Media releases

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Specific Requests for Information

Information not already made available in ECW's Publication Scheme will be accessible through a specific request for information.

The Freedom of Information Act establishes two related rights:

- the right to be told whether information exists, and
- the right to receive the information (subject to exemptions)

These rights can be exercised by anyone worldwide. Specific requests for information not listed in the Publication Scheme will be dealt with by the Office Manager.

Any request must be made in a permanent form (for example in writing or by email) and a charge may be made for dealing with any request. Requestors will not be entitled to information to which any of the exemptions in the Act applies. However, only those specific pieces of information to which the exemption applies will be withheld, and information covered by an exemption will be subject to review by the Chief Executive Officer.

ECW must respond to any request within 20 working days although further reasonable details can be requested in order to identify and locate the information. If a fee is required, the period of 20 working days is extended by up to 3 months until the fee is paid.

Charges

Unless otherwise specified information made available through ECW's Publication Scheme will be free of charge, although ECW reserves the right to charge an appropriate fee for dealing with a specific request for information not listed in the Publication Scheme in accordance with the Act.

Complaints

ECW will coordinate any complaints received in respect of this policy.

- The complaint should be addressed to the Office Manager in the first instance. The complaint will be acknowledged immediately, and every reasonable effort will be made to offer a more comprehensive reply within 21 days.
- If the applicant is not satisfied with the reply, then they should inform the Office Manager within 21 days. The complaint will then be forwarded to the Chief Executive and will be dealt with in accordance ECW's Complaints Procedure.

If applicants are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Complaints Procedure, they may seek an independent review from the Information Commissioner. Requests for review by the Information Commissioner should be made in writing to - The Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Exemptions

ECW reserves the right to withhold information if an exception applies.