



<b>Author</b>	Cassandra Clements	Document Reference	N/A?
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### **1. Introduction and Policy Statement**

At East Suffolk Services Ltd, we believe in transparency, accountability, and the fundamental right of individuals to access information held by our organisation. Our Freedom of Information (FOI) Policy outlines our commitment to upholding the principles of openness and facilitating public access to relevant records while safeguarding sensitive information and respecting privacy rights.

## 2. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations governing freedom of information.
- Promote transparency and accountability in our operations.
- Establish procedures for the efficient processing of FOI requests.
- Safeguard confidential and sensitive information.

## 3. Principles

- **Transparency:** We are committed to providing access to information in a timely and transparent manner, subject to applicable legal requirements and exemptions.
- **Accessibility:** We strive to make information readily accessible to the public through various channels, including our website, public repositories, and upon request.
- **Accountability:** We recognise the importance of accountability in managing and disclosing information responsibly, ensuring accurate and complete responses to FOI requests.
- **Confidentiality:** We maintain the confidentiality of sensitive information, protecting personal data, proprietary business information, and other privileged materials from unauthorised disclosure.

## 4. Scope

This policy covers work that is undertaken on behalf of East Suffolk Council only. Any commercial activity does not have to be released to the public as stated in the Freedom of Information Act 2020. East Suffolk Council should receive FOI requests directly and will work with ESSL on sharing the correct information.

This policy applies to all records and information held by East Suffolk Services Ltd, regardless of format, including but not limited to documents, reports, emails, databases, and audiovisual materials.

## 5. Procedures

- **Submission of FOI Requests:** Members of the public may submit FOI requests in writing to East Suffolk Council via: [Freedom of Information or Environmental Information \(EIR\) requests » East Suffolk Council](#) specifying the information sought and providing sufficient contact details for communication purposes.
- **Processing FOI Requests:** Upon receipt of an FOI request from East Suffolk Council, we will promptly acknowledge the request, conduct a diligent search for the requested information, and assess its releasability based on legal requirements and exemptions.
- **Response and Disclosure:** We will respond to FOI requests within the timeframe prescribed by law, providing access to non-exempt information or explaining the basis for any denials or redactions.
- **Fees and Charges:** We may charge reasonable fees for processing FOI requests in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, including fees for search, retrieval, reproduction, and postage.

## 6. Exemptions

While we strive to facilitate access to information, certain exemptions may apply under the law, including but not limited to:

- Information subject to legal privilege or confidentiality.
- Personal information protected by privacy laws.
- Commercially sensitive information.
- Law enforcement or national security-related information.

## 7. Review and Appeals

Individuals who are dissatisfied with our response to an FOI request may seek a review or appeal in accordance with applicable procedures prescribed by law. This will be via East Suffolk Council, information here: [Freedom of Information or Environmental Information \(EIR\) requests » East Suffolk Council](#).

## **8. Training and Awareness**

We provide training and guidance to staff members responsible for processing FOI requests to ensure consistent and compliant handling of requests and adherence to this policy.

## **9. Compliance and Monitoring**

We regularly review our procedures and practices to ensure compliance with applicable FOI laws and regulations. Monitoring mechanisms are in place to assess the effectiveness of our FOI processes and identify areas for improvement.

## **10. Policy Review**

This policy will be periodically reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect changes in legislation, best practices, and organizational requirements.



Pete Coley - Director of Development and Change