

Charging Policy

Charging for Information Requests

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR)

The council will identify when a request should be treated as an FOI or an EIR request.

When specific information is requested from the council, which is not usually published or available to the public by any other means, this will usually be treated as a request for information under the FOIA or EIR.

The council will work out the cost of responding to the request.

According to the legislation, the cost of both retrieving the information and responding to the request, in the format that the customer wants, needs to be estimated soon after we receive the request.

Our estimate of costs will include:

- the cost in terms of the time taken to respond including the time taken to find the information; and
- the cost of any photocopying, printing, postage or copying in electronic format.

Most information requested will be provided free of charge.

EIR legislation states that the Council can charge for information available under the regulations. However, the Council will only charge when the cost exceeds £450 in line with FOIA charging.

The FOIA says that if a request for information is estimated to cost the council less than £450 to find the information (excluding photocopying and postage costs), it will be provided free of charge. The costs are based on an hourly rate of £25 per hour per employee, so that £450 is the equivalent of 18 hours of a council employee's time.

Any costs of photocopying, electronic copying or postage will only be charged if they exceed £10.00. The council will ensure that cost estimates are arrived at consistently across all the service areas. Council staff are expected to apply a consistent approach to estimating the cost of each request they process, based on the council's FOI policy and guidance notes.

Costs

Printing or photocopying (A4 and A3)	10p per side
Printing or photocopying (A2)	£1.00 per side
Postage costs	Full cost
Electronic formats - CD Rom	£1.00 each



Receiving a fees notice

If the costs of photocopying, electronic copying or postage exceed £10.00 we will send the customer a fees notice. They have three months to pay the fee, and the request will be actioned as soon as we receive payment.

If a request is estimated to cost over £450 the council may charge the full cost of responding to the request or refuse to deal with the request if it is not in the public interest.

The council's duty

The council has a duty to advise and assist people to access information and we will discuss with the customer what information can be made available free of charge.

The council will write to the customer to tell them the estimated cost and send a fees notice. There is no VAT chargeable on most FOI requests.

Response time

All requests will be answered ASAP or within 20 working days from the date of receiving the request. Once a fees notice is issued to you, the clock will stop until payment is received. If we do not hear from you within three months your request will be void.

Contact

For further information please contact Customer Relations on:

☎ 01242 264 350

✉ customerrelations@cheltenham.gov.uk.

