

Approval Questionnaire

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is a free document circulated to aid discussion and promote ideas amongst freedom of information practitioners. The answers below are one practitioner's thoughts and ideas as to how to approach the Approval Questionnaire. They are in no way a suggested or model answer. Other practitioners may well have a different view and indeed we would be happy to hear from them. Of course the view that really matters is that of the Information Commissioner.

There is no intention to give legal advice and to this extent no liability is accepted for any loss or damage incurred as a result of anyone relying on anything stated. You should take specialist legal advice where appropriate.

An Approval Questionnaire must be submitted to the Information Commissioner before the submission deadline 31st December 2002

The Information Commissioner will refer to the completed Approval Questionnaire when assessing the scheme's compliance with the requirements set out in section 19(3) of the Freedom of Information Act, that, in adopting or reviewing a publication scheme, a public authority shall have regard to the public interest in allowing public access to information held by the public authority and in the publication of reasons for decisions made by the authority.

THE QUESTIONS

The following will be used to assess a public authority's compliance with the Freedom of Information Act s19 (3).

1. Each scheme must have regard to public interest.

1a) Have you had regard to the public interest in allowing access to information held by you?

Please give specific details.

Yes. We have had due regard to the public interest in deciding what to include in our publication scheme. We have tried to include information, which is of value and interest to the public, as well as information which we routinely publish. We have done this by asking each department/service area to consider what questions or requests they routinely receive from the public when deciding what to included in their section of the publication scheme. [This has also meant that we have decided to

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publish new information which was not previously available under other regimes. (see below)]

1b) Have you had regard to the public interest in the publication of reasons for decisions made by you?

Please give specific examples.

Yes. We have had regard to the public interest in the publication of reasons for decisions made by us. We recognise the importance of the public knowing the basis of our decisions. We have set out at the beginning of our publication scheme who applicants can contact if they are not satisfied with any of our decisions in relation to the accessing of information held by us.

1c) Have you considered frequently asked questions and specific areas of interest when determining your classes of information?

Please give specific details.

Yes. We have had due regard to frequently asked questions and specific areas of interest when determining our classes of information. We have done this by asking all departments/service areas to conduct a survey of these areas and come up with such documents, which will answer such questions and address such areas of interest. [We have also had due regard to the feedback we have received from various council publications includingand our website]

1d) Have you made information available within your scheme that has not previously been made available under other information regimes?

**If YES, please give details of new information.
If NO, please give reasons why no new information is to be made available.**

Yes.

For example we have included the following in our publication scheme which was not previously available under other information regimes

e.g.....

1e) Have you decided not to include in your scheme any information, which has been made available by you in the past?

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If YES, please give specific details.

We have not, as far as we are aware, decided not to include in your scheme any information, which has been made available by us in the past

If) What steps have you taken to ensure that your scheme is accessible to people with disabilities, and to those in disadvantaged communities and, where appropriate is produced in other languages?

Please give specific examples.

We have informed users in our scheme on page that they can access the scheme in community languages and also in Braille and large print. We will be sending copies of our scheme for display to local day centres and facilities for the disabled as well as mosques and service offices frequented by people from disadvantaged communities