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1. South Essex Homes

South Essex Homes is the Arms Length Management Organisation of Southend Borough Council, and we were formed in October 2005 to manage the Council housing stock in the borough of Southend-on-Sea. In our role as the Arms Length Management Organisation, we manage many aspects of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council’s housing services.

We are governed by a Board of 15 Members, of which 5 are residents or leaseholders, 5 are independent, and 5 are Councillors nominated by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council.

As of December 2008, we manage approximately 6,150 properties, which includes general needs properties, sheltered accommodation and hostels. We also work with SMAART (Southend Multi Agency Anti social behaviour Response Team), which is comprised of officers from Southend Police, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, and South Essex Homes and aims to reduce crime and disorder within the town.
2. Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) was passed to give individuals or organisations the right of access to information held or published by public authorities. This is often referred to as the ‘right to know’.

The definition of a public authority includes

- Central Government and departments
- Local Authorities and departments
- Hospitals, Doctors’ surgeries, dentists, pharmacies and opticians
- State Schools
- Colleges and Universities
- Police Forces
- Prison Services

Full details about how to ask us for information are included in section 4 (Asking for Information), and details of when or why we might not be able to give information is included in section 5 (Exclusions under the Act)

The FOIA also requires us to have a publication scheme, with our information grouped into 7 pre-defined categories. Further details of this can be found in section 6 (Classes of Information).
3. Our Publication Scheme

The FOIA requires us to have a publication scheme, with our information grouped into 7 pre-defined categories. Full details of the categories and their sub-classes can be found in section 6 (Classes of Information). The classes have been amended with effect from 1st January 2009.

Our publication scheme will be reviewed for accuracy once a year, or more often if necessary, although we will add and remove documents throughout the year.

The department responsible for our publication scheme is Corporate Services. You can contact the Freedom of Information officers by telephone on 0800 833 160, by email to foi@seh.southend.gov.uk or by writing to FREEPOST SOUTH ESSEX HOMES.
4. Asking for Information

It is our aim and intention that you can find almost any information through leaflets and information published in our office based at 49 Alexandra Street Southend-on-Sea SS1 1BW, or through our website www.southsussexhomes.co.uk

However there may be times when you require specific information which isn’t normally published, but which is available on request. This might be information which we have to gather from one or more departments in order to provide a full reply, information which is no longer current, or other information which we would not normally publish unless asked.

If you require information, you should contact us in one of the following ways:
- In writing to FREEPOST SOUTH ESSEX HOMES
- By email to foi@seh.southend.gov.uk
- By completing the online form

When you ask for information, you need to tell us your name and address (or name and email address). Please try to be as specific as possible about the information you require, and also tell us which format you would like us to use when we reply—for example email, printed document, large print etc. If you are asking for a large amount of information by e-mail, please note that sometimes we cannot send very large files electronically due to email box restrictions, and in this case you should either provide us with an address, or be prepared to collect the information from an agreed office.

The Act allows us to charge for information provided, and we can charge you 10 pence for each sheet of paper (up to A3) which we send to you. Generally, we will not ask you to make a payment to us if the fee payable would be less than £10. If the fee payable would exceed £450, (based on the printing and paper costs, or on employee time based on £25 an hour), then the Act says that we do not have to comply with your request. In these circumstances, we will offer to work with you to change your request to bring the costs below £450.

We aim to respond to your request within 20 working days. If we cannot do this for any reason, then we will contact you to arrange an extension of time.

If we do ask you to make a payment, the 20 working days will not start until your payment has been received in full.
5. Exclusions under the Act

Sometimes there are good reasons why we cannot provide you with the information you have requested, as the Act contains exemptions that allow us to protect the legitimate interests of ourselves and others.

For example, if you asked for information that might endanger the health and safety of others, breaches a court order, could undermine law enforcement, contains personal or confidential information under the Data Protection Act 1998, or where commercial interests could be prejudiced, then we may apply one of the 25 exemptions. In this instance, we will tell you which exemption we have applied and why we have applied it.

We cannot give you information held by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council or any other public authority, only information or data relating to South Essex Homes.

Some of the information we produce is only needed for a limited period of time, and therefore may be deleted after a period of time has passed. In this case, we may not be able to fully respond to you, however we will not destroy or amend information to avoid its release, and we will work with you to find related information if you wish.

The Act also allows us to decline requests for information where the application could be seen as vexatious. This covers requests which are obsessive, designed to cause disruption or annoyance or to harass or distress staff, where there is a high volume and frequency of correspondence, and repeat requests for the same information. In this case, we are allowed to issue a refusal notice.
6. Classes of Information

With effect from 1st January 2009, we have categorised all of our information into 7 classes, which have been pre-defined for all public authorities. Some of the documents will be readily available in our area office, and most will be on our website. However we will provide any document in hard copy, large print, Braille etc on request.

Because of the large amount of information available, we have created sub groups in some of the main classes. This is to make it easier for you to find documents without the need to make a formal FOI request.

1. Who we are and what we do

   Sub group 1: About us. This includes information about the company's management, our mission statement, and how to contact us.

   Sub group 2: Board and Committees. This includes information about our Board, our codes of governance and terms of reference, and Board and Committee terms of reference.

2. What we spend and how we spend it

   We consider all the documents to reflect our Accounts and Budgets, including company accounts and service charges.

3. What our priorities are and how we are doing

   Sub group 1: Estate Inspection Feedback. This is feedback and results from our estate inspections.

   Sub group 2: Inspections of our services. These are documents relating to inspections carried out by the Audit Commission.

   Sub group 3: Performance Management. These are documents which show how we are meeting our performance targets, including our quarterly performance packs. Also in this section are the Business Plan, and details of Decent Homes works.

4. How we make decisions

   Sub group 1: Board and Committee. This section includes agendas, minutes and papers for Board and open Committee meetings.

   Sub group 2: Focus, Action and Resident. This section includes agendas, minutes and papers for Focus Group meetings, Action Group meetings, and Resident forums.
5. **Our policies and procedures**

Sub group 1: Policy Impact Assessments. These are documents which monitor the effect of our policies and procedures to ensure equal and diverse access to our services.

Sub group 2: Policies and procedures. These are copies of our policies and procedures.

Sub group 3: Strategies. These are copies of our strategy documents.

6. **Lists and registers**

We consider all our documents in this section to reflect our lists and registers, including the list of Decent Homes Contractors.

7. **The Services we offer**

Sub group 1: Aids and Adaptations. This section covers documents relating to the aids and adaptations services.

Sub group 2: Applying for a home or garage. This section tells you what you need to know about applying for a Southend Borough Council home or garage.

Sub group 3: Asbestos. This section provides information about asbestos - how we deal with it and what you need to know.

Sub group 4: Careline. This section provides information about our Careline services.

Sub group 5: Cleaning and Caretaking. This section provides information about our caretaking services, including the caretaking schedules.

Sub group 6: Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour. This includes our ASB compact, details of neighbourhood agreements, and case studies.

Sub group 7: Decent Homes. This is details of our renewals and upgrade works.

Sub group 8: Equality and Diversity. This includes details of our equal opportunities work.

Sub group 9: External Service Providers. This are documents kindly donated or loaned to us by other service provides which are intended to promote or advertise their services.

Sub group 10: General Care and guidance. This includes general information to help you care for your home, and to let you know what services are available.
Sub group 11: Home Insurance. This is details of the home insurance policy available to residents.

Sub group 12: Leaseholder Services. This includes details of services we offer to our leaseholders.

Sub group 13: Mutual Exchanges. This includes information about the mutual exchange of properties.

Sub group 14: News and Views. This includes our residents’ magazines, and other information newsletters.

Sub group 15: Rent and Money. This includes information about ways to pay rent, details about rent payment cards, direct debit and standing order forms, and how we make refunds if appropriate.

Sub group 16: Repairs and Maintenance. This includes information about Right to Repair, major works guides, and details of our contractors.

Sub group 17: Resident Involvement. This is includes details of how to get involved, information about Residents’ Associations, details of block voices, and information about tenant led projects.

Sub group 18: Resident Profiling. This includes the form used in gathering resident information, and details of how we will use the information.

Sub group 19: Right to Buy. This covers information about the Right to Buy your council property.

Sub group 20: Service Improvement. This includes details of our complaints, compliments and comments service.

Sub group 21: Sheltered Housing and Hostels. This includes profiles of our sheltered housing schemes, information about our hostels and details of the services we can offer.

Sub group 22: Supporting our Residents. This includes information about tackling domestic violence, the Family Intervention Project, and helping vulnerable people.

Sub group 23: Translations and Languages. This includes translations of some of our most commonly used documents, and information about translation services we use.

Sub group 24: Working for us. This includes details of any employment vacancies, and the relevant forms to use if applying for a job.
7. How can we help you?

We hope that you will find the publication scheme helps you. However if you would like to comment on the scheme or have any other questions about the Freedom of Information Act 2000, please contact us in one of the following ways:

Email to foi@seh.southend.gov.uk
Write to FREEPOST SOUTH ESSEX HOMES
Telephone us on 0800 833 160

For more information about the Freedom of Information Act 2000, you can write to the Information Commissioner’s office at the address below.

Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

You can telephone the Information Commissioner's office on 08456 30 60 60, or visit their website at www.ico.gov.uk
This document is also available in large print, on audio tape or CD, Braille or on CD rom. Please contact the number above and this can be arranged for you.