

Littlehampton Town Council

Data Protection Policy

1. The Data Protection Act 1998 requires that anyone who handles personal information has to comply with a number of important principles. This includes individuals who work for organisations as well as the organisations themselves. It also gives individuals rights over their personal information.
2. The ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) has legal powers to ensure that all organisations register and comply with the requirements of the Act. These powers are focused on ensuring that organisations meet their obligations under the act.
3. Littlehampton Town Council needs to collect and use certain types of information about people with whom it conducts business in order to operate. These people include current, past, and prospective employees, suppliers, clients/customers and others with whom it communicates. In addition, it may occasionally be required by law to collect and use certain types of information to comply with the requirements of government departments.

Policy Operation

1. Littlehampton Town Council regards the lawful and correct treatment of personal information as very important to its successful operations and to maintaining confidence between the Council and those with whom it carries out business. The Council will ensure that it treats personal information lawfully and correctly.
2. All such personal information must be handled properly however it is collected, recorded and used - whether on paper, in a computer or recorded on other material - and there are safeguards to ensure this within the Data Protection Act 1998.
3. Unauthorised disclosure of personal data is a criminal offence. Data held by the Council may only be disclosed for registered purposes to:
 - The person themselves.
 - Employees of the Council and Councillors as required in the course of their duties.
 - The Courts under direction of a Court Order.
4. Littlehampton Town Council manages personal data in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. The Act applies to personal information about living, identifiable persons. The collection, holding and use of data is governed by eight principles.

Data Protection Principles

1. Personal data shall be processed fairly and lawfully.
2. Personal data shall be held only for one or more specified and lawful purposes.
3. Personal data shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive.
4. Personal data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date.
5. Personal data processed for any purpose or purposes shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for the purpose or those purposes.
6. Personal data shall be processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects under this Act.

7. Appropriate security measures shall be taken against unauthorised processing of personal data and against accidental loss or destruction of personal data.
8. Personal data shall not be transferred to a country outside the European Community unless that country ensures an adequate level of protection for that data.
9. In addition, Littlehampton Town Council will ensure that:
 - There is someone with specific responsibility for data protection in the organisation. Currently, the nominated person is the Deputy Town Clerk.
 - Everyone managing and handling personal information understands that they are contractually responsible for following good data protection practice.
 - Everyone managing and handling personal information is appropriately trained to do so and is appropriately supervised.
 - Methods of handling personal information are clearly described, regularly assessed, and evaluated. These shall include obtaining consent, data accuracy, reviews, security, storage and disposals, data exchange and transfers etc.
 - Anybody wanting to make enquiries about handling personal information knows what to do.
 - Queries about handling personal information are promptly and courteously dealt with.
 - Performance in handling personal information is regularly assessed and evaluated. This shall include monitoring the processing of personal data, security breaches etc.
 - A regular review and audit is made of the way personal information is managed.

The Consumer

1. The Data Protection Act gives individuals the right to know what information is held about them. It provides a framework to ensure that personal information is handled properly.
2. The Act works in two ways. Firstly, it states that anyone who processes personal information must comply with eight principles, which make sure that personal information is:
 - Fairly and lawfully processed
 - Processed for limited purposes
 - Adequate, relevant, and not excessive
 - Accurate and up to date
 - Not kept for longer than is necessary
 - Processed in line with their rights
 - Secure
 - Not transferred to other countries without adequate protection
3. The second area covered by the Act provides individuals with important rights, including the right to find out what personal information is held on computer and most paper records.
4. Should an individual or organisation feel they're being denied access to personal information they're entitled to, or feel their information has not been handled according to the eight principles, they can contact the Information Commissioner's Office for help. Complaints are usually dealt with informally, but if this isn't possible, enforcement action can be taken.
5. Penalties for not complying with the Act, or not providing lawful information can lead to large fines and a criminal record.