



Rochdale  
Boroughwide Housing

## Freedom of Information Act

# Guide to information for Rochdale Boroughwide Housing

## Introduction

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing is a public authority for the purpose of the Freedom of Information Act. This guide gives examples of the kinds of information that we would expect to provide in order to meet our commitments under the model publication scheme. The guide is not meant to be a definitive list. The legal commitment is to the model publication scheme, and RBH looks to provide as much information as possible on a routine basis.

This guide follows the format recommended by the Information Commissioner.

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## 1. Who we are and what we do

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing is a not for profit company which is responsible for managing council housing on behalf of Rochdale Council.

The company came into existence on 1 April 2002. It is a company wholly owned by the council, but managed by a board of directors rather than a council committee.

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing manages around 14,000 properties and provides all the landlord services to these properties.

### Company Details

Postal address:

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing Limited

Registered Office:

PO Box 69

The Old Post Office

The Esplanade

Rochdale

OL16 1AE

Registered in England and Wales No 4394435

Telephone number: 0845 070 5170

Fax number: 01706 273806

e-mail address: [rbh@rbhousing.org.uk](mailto:rbh@rbhousing.org.uk)

Website: [www.rbhousing.org.uk](http://www.rbhousing.org.uk)

### Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts.

The locations and opening hours of our offices are available.

#### • Roles and responsibilities

A structure chart showing the job titles of all our senior managers is available. Job descriptions (including salary scales) and person specifications for all staff posts within the organisation are available.

The relationship with Rochdale Borough Council (the public authority owning the company) is set out in the management agreement, which is available.

#### • Articles of Association

The memorandum of association and the articles of association are the rules under which RBH operates. These are available.

#### • Board membership

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing is overseen by a board of directors made of 13 members - six tenants, four councillors and three independents.

The names and biographical details of Board members and their membership of sub-committees are available. As are their individual entries in the register of interests.

- **Senior executives**

The names and responsibilities of those making strategic and operational decisions about providing the company's services are shown below. Headed by a Chief Executive, the company has three divisions, each with its own director.

Gareth Swarbrick, Chief Executive

Andrew Toft, Director of Operations

The Operations Division is responsible for the direct delivery of most services to tenants - including rehousing, day-to-day repairs and rent collection.

Nickie Hallard, Director of Resources

The Resources Division provides the company with its essential support services such as finance, personnel, training, I.T., quality assurance and policy development.

Eugene Wilson, Director of Property Services

The Property Services Division has lead responsibility for implementing the major housing investment programme, monitors the repairs call centre, and manages a range of central repair functions including central heating and electrical services.

Biographical details for these staff are available.

- **Staff structure**

Copies of staff structures for all teams within the company are available.

**Contact points**

Contacts for our main services are:

Allocations – HomeChoice 0800 091 2248

Repairs 0845 076 3636

Contacts for our local housing offices are:

**ROCHDALE NORTH**

Freehold Housing Office

271 Olney, Freehold, Rochdale

OL11 4LQ

Telephone: (01706) 924063

Opening hours: Monday to Friday

9am – 12pm & 2pm – 4.30pm

Lower Falinge Housing Office

236 Newstead, Lower Falinge, Rochdale OL12 6RQ

Telephone: (01706) 642220

Opening hours: Monday to Friday

9am – 12pm & 2pm – 4.30pm

## ROCHDALE SOUTH & PENNINES

Newbold, Littleborough & Milnrow Housing Office  
Witley Road, Rochdale OL16 5HE  
Telephone: (01706) 714460  
Opening hours: Monday & Friday only  
9am – 12.30pm

Kirkholt Housing Office /  
Council Customer Service Centre  
46 The Strand, Kirkholt, Rochdale  
OL12 2JG  
Telephone: (01706) 354222  
Opening hours: Monday to Friday  
9am – 4.45pm except Tuesday when closing time is 3.45pm

## HEYWOOD

Cedar Avenue Housing Office  
65/67 Cedar Avenue, Heywood  
OL10 4TU  
Telephone: (01706) 364124  
Opening hours: Monday to Friday  
9am – 12 noon

## MIDDLETON

Middleton Housing Office / Council Customer Service Centre  
Council Offices, Sadler Street, Middleton, Manchester M24 5UJ  
Telephone: (01706) 927120  
Opening hours: Monday to Friday  
9am - 4.45pm except Tuesday when closing time is 3.45pm

### **Note: SPRING 2010**

New Middleton contact details  
Parkfield House, Manchester Old Road, Middleton, Manchester M24 4DQ

## **2. What we spend and how we spend it**

Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit is available..

Financial information for the current and previous financial year is always available. We generally expect to be able to provide financial information for the previous 6 years.

### **Annual accounts**

All annual accounts for every year are available.

### **Procurement procedures**

Our procurement policies & procedures are available.

### **Board members' allowances and expenses**

We publish board members expenses annually. Board members do not receive any allowances or other remuneration. All expenses are paid in line with the expenses policy, which is available.

### **Staff expenses**

A copy of the staff expenses that can be incurred or claimed is available. The total expenses incurred by or paid to individual senior staff by reference to categories is available. Totals for all staff, including car mileage, are available.

### **3. What our priorities are and how we are doing**

In common with many public sector organisations, RBH has a number of strategies, policies and plans. These include Corporate debt collection, Equality & Diversity, Relet Standard, Asset Management, Responsive Repairs, Recharges, Consultation, Domestic violence, Asbestos, Adaptations, Leaseholders, ICT, Race Equality Scheme, Voids, Risk management, Decoration – new tenants, Decent standard plus, FTAs, Decoration – major works & planned maintenance, Customer Care, Tenant Participation and Quality.

RBH has a large number of performance indicators, which cover virtually all service areas. Most major indicators are available from April 2002. This enables comparison of performance over time. RBH also compares its performance with other housing providers. A substantial amount of benchmarking data is available.

Each year we conduct ‘internal audits’, which are currently carried out by *Deloitte and Touche LLP*. Copies of these reports and the current year’s programme are available.

RBH has been inspected by the Audit Commission’s Housing Inspectorate. Copies of these inspection reports and associated documents are available.

Since 2002 RBH has carried out a number of reviews, particularly in terms of value for money. Copies of the reports on these reviews are available.

**• Any reports indicating main priorities and progress against them**  
Rochdale Borough Council’s management agreement requires RBH to implement plans for Performance, Development and Service Delivery. RBH’s Board receives reports on progress against the Service Delivery Plan.

We also have a Business Plan and a VFM strategy.

**• Annual Report**

We have published an annual report for the last three years.

## 4. How we make decisions

RBH's main decision making body is its Board. Copies of most reports to the Board are available. Some reports are confidential and may not be released or may be redacted. The Board delegates some decisions to sub-committees. All Board meetings are open to the public (apart from discussion of confidential items).

### • Minutes of meetings of the Board

Copies of the minutes of Board meetings, which record all decisions made by the Board are available. Minutes of sub-committee meetings are also available.

### Area Panels

RBH seeks to involve tenants in decision making. One mechanism for doing this is our Area Panels. Local tenants vote on how delegated budgets are allocated.

There are four area panels covering the following four township areas: Heywood, Middleton, Pennines and Rochdale.

Everyone who lives on or near a Rochdale Council estate is welcome to attend, whether you are a tenant, owner occupier or leaseholder.

Budgets delgated to the Area panels are:

- One Off Tenant Participation grants.
- Quick Wins (environmental improvements)

## 5. Our policies and procedures

### • Policies and procedures for conducting internal business

There are a number of policies and procedures for parts of RBH that deal with internal customers.

### • Policies and procedures for delivering our services

We aim to have policies and procedures that cover all the services we deliver.

### • Policies and procedures for recruiting and employing staff

We have a fair recruitment policy and procedure.

Other employment policies include:

- Pay & Grading
- Confidentiality policy
- Equalities & Diversity policy
- Health & Safety policy
- Staff Development & Training
- Work Life Balance Scheme

### • Customer service

Standards for providing services to the company's customers are contained with our *Service Standards*. Leaflets for all these are generally available at our offices and on our website.

RBH has a formal complaints procedure.

You can make a formal comment or complaint about any aspect of our services by:

- Visiting your local housing office and completing a formal complaints form
- Telephoning or writing to your local housing office or the Complaints Co-ordinator (details below) stating that you want to register a formal complaint.
- Email [rbh.policy@rbhousing.org.uk](mailto:rbh.policy@rbhousing.org.uk)
- Complete the online complaint form at [www.rbhousing.org.uk](http://www.rbhousing.org.uk)

All formal complaints will be fully investigated and dealt with fairly and in confidence. You should receive a written response within 15 working days.

If you are not satisfied with the response or the way we have dealt with your complaint you can appeal and ask for the matter to be looked at by the Chief Executive by contacting:

**The Complaints Co-ordinator**  
**Rochdale Boroughwide Housing**  
**The Old Post Office**  
**The Esplanade**  
**Rochdale**  
**OL16 1AE**

**Telephone 0845 123 5628**  
**Email:**  
**[rbh.policy@rbhousing.org.uk](mailto:rbh.policy@rbhousing.org.uk)**

If you are still not satisfied with our response you can ask the Local Government Ombudsman to investigate. You should allow us reasonable opportunity to investigate and respond to your complaint before contacting the Ombudsman. All complaints to the Ombudsman must be made in writing to:

The Local Government Ombudsman  
PO Box 4771  
Coventry CV4 0EH

The Local Government Advice Team can be contacted on 0845-602-1983

- **Records management and personal data policies**

Our data security, records retention, destruction and archive policy is available. Policies and protocols on data sharing are available.

- **Charging regimes and policies**

Generally RBH will seek to avoid charging for information as part of our commitment to openness. Where we do make a charge this will be in line with any statutory charging regimes that apply.

## **6. Lists and registers**

- **Any lists or registers that may be required to produce in the conduct of their business**

All statutory registers are available for public inspection.

- **Any property asset list**

RBH does not own any property. We do maintain records of the 14,000 dwellings, the shops and garages that we manage for the Council.

- **Disclosure logs**

RBH maintains a log of information provided in response to FOIA requests, which is readily available.

## 7. The services we offer

We are responsible for providing the following services:

- Ordering day to day repairs
- Carrying out major repairs and improvements
- Collecting rent and dealing with rent arrears
- Dealing with neighbour nuisance
- Managing tenancies
- Letting properties
- Consulting tenants
- Managing sheltered housing
- Managing Right to Buy applications and the tenants' home contents insurance scheme

### • Details of RBH services

Further details of our services are available.

#### Online Services for Tenants

Pay your rent (or service charge)

Report a repair

Benefits calculator

Make a complaint

Mutual Exchange (swap homes with other tenants)

HomeChoice: To find a home to rent



OpenAccess: To check your rent balance, view your rent statement and check progress of your repair



#### Other services for which there is standard information or leaflets

##### **Your Tenancy**

- Tenancy conditions

##### **Rent and Arrears:**

- Paying your rent and rent arrears
- Your rent statement explained
- Help with debt and benefits
- Paying your rent and rent arrears recovery - Our service standards

##### **Repairs and Maintenance:**

- Repairs
- Planned Maintenance
- Repairs - Our service standards
- Digital Television Upgrade Programme

##### **Rehousing:**

- Rehousing - Our service standards
- Property Letting - Our service standards
- Domestic violence
- Sheltered housing
- Help for Homeless people

- Housing for people with disabilities

**Anti-social Behaviour:**

- Anti-social Behaviour
- Anti-social behaviour - Our service standards
- Communities First (Incentives to recognise, promote and reward those who respect their communities and the contributions made by tenants and groups to improve community spirit)

**Customer Care:**

- Housing Equality Team - How we can help
- How to make a complaint

**Estate Management:**

- Caretaking - Our service standards

**Getting Involved:**

- Tenant Participation
- Having your say and Consultation

**Other Services:**

- Home contents insurance scheme
- Right to Buy
- Freedom of Information
- Environmental - Quick Wins

**• Services for which the company is entitled to recover a fee, together with those fees**

RBH is paid a management fee by Rochdale Borough Council for all the services that it provides. The Council requires RBH to charge individuals for a small number of services.

**• Leaflets**

Leaflets are generally on display and available at our offices.

**• Media Releases**

Most of our press releases are available on our website, but all are available on request.

## **Procedure for Accessing Information**

A large amount of information is available via the websites at <http://www.rbhousing.org.uk/> and [www.rochdalehomechoice.org.uk](http://www.rochdalehomechoice.org.uk)

Requests for information which cannot be downloaded from the websites, or from applicants who do not have website access, should be made to the Senior Policy & Performance Officer.

Written requests:

Senior Policy & Performance Officer  
Rochdale Boroughwide Housing  
PO Box 69  
The Old Post Office  
The Esplanade  
Rochdale  
OL16 1AE

Telephone requests  
0845 070 5170

e-mail requests  
[rbh.policy@rbhousing.org.uk](mailto:rbh.policy@rbhousing.org.uk)

Fax requests  
01706 273806

Responses to requests for information will be sent as soon as possible; generally within 5 working days. If a request is going to take more than five days the applicant will be informed of the extended timescale.

We will do what is reasonable to provide information in alternative formats on request, including audio, Braille, large print and translations. If we encounter difficulties in meeting a request, we will discuss the best solution with the applicant.

## **Charges for the Information**

Typically the cost of invoicing does not justify charging for information although we do reserve the right to charge where significant amounts of photocopying or work may be involved. These charges will then be in accordance with the Fees Regulation under the Act.

If a charge is applicable it will be specified at the time of the request and will be payable in advance of the document being provided.

## **Exempt Information**

Some information held by public authorities is regarded as exempt information under Part II of the FOIA. There are 24 such exemptions and they can be applied to information held for a variety of purposes. The exemptions include material related to law enforcement, information provided in confidence, commercial interests, and personal data (individuals already have the right of access to information about themselves under the Data Protection Act 1998).

## **Copyright**

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## **Complaints/Suggestions**

If you have any complaints or suggestions about the publication scheme, please indicate to the Senior Policy & Performance Officer. Alternatively, you can contact the independent body overseeing the Act which is the Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AS (Tel 01625 545745, Fax: 01625 524510, e-mail: [mail@dataprotection.gov.uk](mailto:mail@dataprotection.gov.uk)). Information in respect of the Act can also be found on the Information Commissioner's website which is [www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk).