

INFORMAL GIPA REQUEST – FACT SHEET

Objective

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide information about Informal GIPA Requests and offer guidance to customers seeking access to Council records.

What is a GIPA?

The term GIPA is an abbreviation for the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (the GIPA Act).

The GIPA Act provides how the public can seek access to Council records, rights of access, limitations to these rights, and obligations on Council in relation to making information available to the public. When we speak about making a GIPA application, this simply means that a customer seeks access to Council records as per the rights set out in the GIPA Act.

What is an Informal GIPA Request?

An Informal GIPA Request is a way to seek access to Council records informally as provided in section 8 of the GIPA Act. This permits Council the option to give you access to information in response to your informal request without requiring you to make a Formal GIPA Application under Part 4 of the GIPA Act.

Section 8 of the GIPA Act creates no legislative obligation on Council to grant access informally.

This means that:

- Council can impose conditions on the release of information to you including how you can access the information,
- you do not need to pay an application fee, or other costs such as processing charges,
- there is no legislative timeframe imposed on the Council to respond, and
- you do not have the right to have the Council's decision reviewed.

How do I make an Informal GIPA Request?

In the first instance you should check on Council's website to see if the information you are seeking is freely available to the public.

If you are not able to find the information you are looking for on Council's website, then you may make an Informal GIPA Request by downloading and completing a PDF form.

A link to the form has been included below.

- [Informal GIPA Request Form – PDF Downloadable document](#)

Can I make an Informal GIPA Request to seek access to my house plans?

Yes, you can make an Informal GIPA Request to seek access to your house plans. If you are only seeking access to your house plans you may submit an Informal GIPA Request – Plans Only form.

A link to the PDF downloadable document has been included below.

- [Informal GIPA Request – Plans Only Form – PDF Downloadable document](#)

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Asking for information

When making your request, try to avoid 'fishing' terms such as asking for, *any and all* records relating to a topic. Tell us what information you are seeking access to; be as descriptive as possible, this will ensure concise and accurate searches. When making your application tell us:

- about the subject matter of the information you are requesting,
- whether the information you are seeking access to falls within any specific date range,
- about the type of information, you are requesting (for example, a report or emails), and
- whether the information you are requesting access to, is your own personal information.

When preparing your request, keep in mind that this is a request for access to records that are held by Council. As such, requests that raise questions seeking advice, clarification, opinion or guidance cannot be dealt with under an Informal GIPA Request. Additionally, any enquiries seeking updates in relation to ongoing matters with other sections of Council should be raised directly with the section dealing with the matter rather than making an Informal GIPA Request.

How long will it take to process an Informal GIPA Request?

The request process will take a minimum of 20 working days (4 weeks), from the date your request is received by Council. Should there be a high level of demand for our services and/or the information being sought is not easily accessible, a request can take up to 6 weeks to be processed.

Requests are placed in a queue and processed in order of receipt. Due to the volume of requests received by Council we do not consider any requests for priority processing.

The accessibility of records and the level of demand on our services impacts the time it takes for us to provide a response. As such, this process cannot be sped up, even if you contact Council.

Are there any charges for an Informal GIPA Request?

There are no charges for an Informal GIPA Request.

However, Council may refuse to deal with a request informally should the request require significant time and resources to process. If we refuse to deal with a request informally you have the option to make a Formal GIPA Application which allows Council to impose processing fees for the time needed to deal with an application.

Please see Councils [Formal GIPA Application - Fact Sheet](#) for more information on the Formal GIPA Application process.

Will I get access to the information I have asked for?

Access to records will depend on what information is being sought.

Under the GIPA Act there is a presumption in favour of disclosure of information unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure. In line with this presumption, we assess all records which are subject to an Informal GIPA Request and consider whether there are any factors that would limit access to the record.

An example of an access limiting factor would be where a document contains personal information about an individual other than the person making the request. In this situation, we may still grant access, but we would grant access to a copy of the record which has had all the personal information deleted from the document.

The manner of access may also vary, for example, access to house plans may be granted on a view only basis where the plans are subject to a current copyright restriction.

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