



## **PUBLICATION SCHEME**

<b>Policy Owner</b>	<b>Corporate Services</b>
<b>Version</b>	<b>3.0</b>
<b>Issue Date</b>	<b>December 2014</b>

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## 1.0 Policy Issue Status

- 1.1 This policy is a controlled document and is held centrally by the Corporate Services Section.

Version	Date actioned	Reason for change
1.0	November 2003	First drafted as per Freedom of Information legislation
1.1	December 2004	Redrafted to include new complaints process
2.0	October 2008	Reviewed as per ICO's new model publication scheme
2.1	April 2011	Updated to reflect what information is routinely published on CC website
3.0	December 2014	Full review in line with ICO's definition document for Northern Ireland Non-departmental Public Bodies

## **2.0 Publication Scheme**

- 2.1 This policy demonstrates the Consumer Council's interpretation of the guidance provided to NDPBs by the Information Commissioners Office (ICO). It demonstrates the decision making process in deciding what information detailed within the ICO guidance that we will proactively make available. The retention of documents on this publication scheme will be in line with the Consumer Council's records management policy and retention and disposal schedule.

### **3.0 Classes of information**

#### **3.1 Who we are and what we do**

- **Roles and responsibilities**

We provide an outline and detailed information on the roles and responsibilities of the Board and Executive Team on our website.

- **Organisational structure**

The breakdown of the Consumer Council by function and management responsibilities is available on our website.

- **Information relating to the legislation relevant to the Consumer Council's functions**

Details of the role and remit of the Consumer Council are available on our website. Further information setting out our founding legislation and the Consumer Council's functions, duties and powers are set out in our Management Statement and Financial Memorandum on our website.

- **Lists of information relating to organisations with which the Consumer Council works in partnership**

The Consumer Council is funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and investment.

- **Senior staff and Board members**

Details of senior staff and Council members are available on our website.

- **The location and contact details of the authority**

Details are available on our website.

## 3.2 What we spend and how we spend it

The majority of financial information in this section is available in the Consumer Council annual accounts and Annual Business Plan.

- **Financial statements, budgets and variance reports**  
Our Annual Report and Accounts which demonstrates annual financial performance is available on our website.
- **Capital programme**  
The Consumer Council does not have any major plans for capital expenditure.
- **Spending reviews**  
The Consumer Council's budget is allocated under the government's three year comprehensive spending review process. Annual budgets are reviewed and regulated via the Department of Finance and Personnel monitoring rounds.
- **Financial audit reports**  
The Consumer Council is subject to an annual audit undertaken by NI Audit Office (NIAO). The Annual Report and Accounts contains a summary of their audit findings.
- **Staff and Board members' allowances and expenses**  
The Board, Chief Executive and Directors' remunerations are included in the Annual Accounts. Details of allowances & expenses relating to reimbursements made to staff for expenses occurred whilst carrying out their role in set out in the Travel & Subsistence policy.
- **Pay and grading structures**  
The Board, Chief Executive and Directors' remunerations are included in the Annual Accounts.  
The latest salary scales for each grade are available at the following website: <http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/pay>

- **Procurement Procedures**

The Consumer Council uses the services of the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) of the Department of Finance and Personnel for the procurement of goods and services for contracts over £5K. As our Centre of Procurement Expertise, CPD ensures the Consumer Council's tendering process adheres to the relevant legislative and policy frameworks.

For procurements valued below this threshold, or where it is not feasible to use CPD services, the Consumer Council follows CPD's procurement best practice guidance.

Current tender opportunities are available on their website [www.cpdni.gov.uk](http://www.cpdni.gov.uk).

- **Lists of contracts awarded and their value**

The Consumer Council's formal tendering process for the procurement of most goods and services valued above £5K is facilitated through the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD). On their website CPD provide details of all Consumer Council contracts valued above £30k which have been awarded including contract title, successful supplier, value of contract and contract period.

- **Financial statements for projects and events**

Details are available within our financial accounts and Annual Business Plan.

- **Internal financial regulations**

Details of our internal financial regulations and procedures are set out in our Purchasing Policy and Procedures and the Anti-Fraud Policy and Fraud Response plan available on our website.

### 3.3 What our priorities are and how we are doing

- **Strategic plans**

Our Corporate Plan is produced every four years and sets out the key objectives and targets for the Consumer Council and is available on our website.

- **Annual business plan**

Our Business Plan is published annually and sets out the strategic objectives and targets for the year ahead and is available on our website.

- **Annual report**

The Annual Report includes the annual accounts and a detailed breakdown of all aspects of organisational performance and is available on our website.

- **Internal and external performance reviews**

The Enquiries and Complaints Report provides an insight into our consumer complaints role, how complaints have been dealt with and customer satisfaction levels with the complaints service. This is available on our website.

- **Reports to the Assembly**

Responses provided to questions from the Northern Ireland Assembly are available on their website.

- **Inspection reports where the Consumer Council is subject to formal inspection**

The Consumer Council is subject to regular Internal Audits. This process is designed to assess the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the risk management, control and governance processes. The Consumer Council does not propose to proactively release these reports. However information in relation to the Internal Audit Services opinion, in respect of the adequacy of the control systems is contained within the Annual Report and Accounts.



### 3.4 How we make decisions

- **Major policy proposals and decisions**

Major policy decisions are made at Board level and details of these are included in the Board Minutes available on our website. Minutes from our Audit Committee meetings are available on request.

- **Background information relating to major policy proposals and decisions**

As above, summary background papers for Board meetings will be made available on request.

- **Public consultations**

Details of public consultations and documents relating to major policy development issues and legislation changes that the Consumer Council has responded to are available on our website.

- **Minutes of senior level meetings**

Minutes from Board meetings will be available within four weeks of being agreed. Minutes are normally agreed at the following board meeting and will not include exempt items, for example, personnel issues or matters concerning Consumer Council policy which has not yet been finalised. Minutes are available on our website.

- **Reports and papers provided for consideration at senior level meetings**

Summary background papers that can be released will be made available on request for relevant Board meetings.

- **Internal communications guidance and criteria used for decision making i.e. process systems and key personnel**

The guidance for finance staff used by the Consumer Council can be found on the Accountability and Accountancy Services Division (AASD) (a division of the Department of Finance and Personnel) website.

### 3.5 Policies and procedures

- **Policies and procedures for the conduct of NDPB business**
- **Policies and procedures for the provision of services**

The Management Statement & Financial Memorandum sets out the broad framework within which the Consumer Council operates and is available on our website.
- **Policies and procedures for the recruitment and employment of staff**

Details of current vacancies are published on the jobs section of our website. Policies and procedures relating to employee relations, equal opportunities and pay and conditions are available on request. (This class may contain exempt information; reasons will be given where information has been withheld). Our annual equality report which sets out our progress in relation to equality issues is available on our website.
- **Customer service**

The Consumer Council's complaints procedure is set out in our "Got a complaint" section on our website. Information on how to make a request for information including subject access requests is available in our FOI Factsheet on our website.
- **Records management and personal data policies**

Our records retention and disposal schedule is available on request. Under the National Fraud Initiative, the Consumer Council may share information provided to it with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds, in order to prevent and detect fraud – details are available on our website.
- **Charging regimes and policies**

Our aim is to make as much information as possible available free of charge.

Information available on our website is free of charge (i.e. there will be no charge made by us, however you would have to pay any charges made by your Internet service provider, personal printing costs, etc).

For those without Internet access, a single printout of the information contained on our website is available on request. However requests for multiple printouts may attract a charge for the cost of photocopy, postage, etc. Where such charges apply, this will be clearly identified. Actual charges levied are not listed within the Scheme itself since these may vary for individual documents within an information class, but we will let you know of the charge at the time of your request.

***We reserve the right to review and amend our charging policy at any time.***

In determining a charge for an information request, the Fees Regulations associated with the UK Freedom of Information legislation permit an authority to charge for costs it reasonably expects to incur in determining whether it holds the information requested, locating the information or documents containing the information, retrieving such information or documents and extracting the required information from said documents. We may take into account the costs attributable to the time that our staff are expected to spend on these activities at the rate of £25/hour.

The Regulations also remove from public authorities the obligation to respond to requests for information should the cost of doing so exceed their appropriate limit. It is our policy not to charge for Freedom of Information requests but instead to decline from answering requests that would exceed our appropriate limit. In the case of Consumer Council this is £450.

### 3.6 Lists and registers

- **Public registers and registers held as public records**  
The Consumer Council does not hold any public registers.
- **Asset registers and Information Asset Register**  
Total value of assets held is available in our Annual Report and Accounts on our website. The Consumer Council does not have an asset register for the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005.
- **CCTV**  
The Consumer Council does not operate CCTV.
- **Disclosure logs**  
The Consumer Council does not hold a disclosure log at present.
- **Register of gifts and hospitality provided to Board members and senior personnel**  
An annual log of gifts and hospitality provided to Board members and senior staff is updated every six months and is available on our website. Details include the source of and description of the gift/hospitality and whether it was accepted.
- **Any register of interests kept in the Consumer Council**  
A register of conflicting personal and business interests is held and is available on request.
- **Other lists required by law**  
None.

### 3.7 The Services we offer

- **Regulatory responsibilities**

The Consumer Council has a number of statutory duties and responsibilities. Details of these are available on our website.

- **Services for public authorities**

The Consumer Council works in partnership with other authorities to provide services. Details of these can be found on our website.

- **Services for industry**

The Consumer Council has a statutory role to represent the interests of businesses. Further information is available under the Business Support section on our website.

- **Services for other organisations**

The Consumer Council works directly with consumers and colleagues from the education, voluntary, community and advice sectors – further details are available on our website.

- **Services for members of the public**

Details of the Consumer Council's complaints function is available on our website.

- **Services for which the Consumer Council is entitled to recover a fee together with those fees**

The Consumer Council does not recover fees for services provided.

- **Leaflets, booklets and newsletters**

The Consumer Council has produced a range of consumer research reports which are available on our website.

- **Advice and guidance**

General leaflets on the work of the Consumer Council in relation to advice and information is available on our website.

- **Media releases**

Material released to the press and other media is available on the Consumer Council website.

## **4.0 Handling of complaints**

- 4.1 We have an obligation to make information available in the manner described in this scheme. Should we receive any complaints about our failure to make information available, these will be investigated in the first instance by the Director of Operations who will respond within 20 days.
- 4.2 If we have not resolved the issue to your satisfaction you are entitled to refer your complaint to the Information Commissioner in writing to: The Information Commissioner, Wycliffe House Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF (Tel: 01625 545 700; Fax: 01625 524 510).