

From: Freedom of Information Requests

Sent: 15 May 2025 08:29

To:

Subject: FOI Response -

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request dated 17 April 2025 for information about business rates accounts. Please find below City of Doncaster Council's responses to the questions you have raised.

Request

I request the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 about Business Rates Accounts held by your Council:

- Account Name
- Account Start Date
- Billing Authority Reference
- Current 2023 List Rateable Value
- Details of any reliefs where applied, including a further breakdown if possible of:
 - o Type of relief applied
 - o Date the relief was applied
 - o Value of the relief
- Full Address of the rated assessment
- Billing Address
- Occupied/Empty Status
- Description

Response

For Billing Authority Reference, Current 2023 List Rateable Value, Full Address of the rated assessment and Description - this information is exempt from disclosure under Section 21 of the Freedom of information Act. Section 21 exempts information from the right of access if that information is reasonably accessible to the applicant by other means. In this case the information is available on the Valuation Office Agency website: [Find a business rates valuation - GOV.UK](#).

For all other information - this information is exempt from disclosure under Section 31(1)(a) of the Freedom of information Act. Section 31 exempts information from the right of access under the Freedom of Information Act if disclosure would prejudice the prevention or detection of crime. We consider that the disclosure of this information would be likely to prejudice the prevention of crime as the information may contribute to criminal knowledge as it will be publicly available and could be used in targeted fraud based on ratepayer information.

As Section 31 is a qualified exemption, the Council is obliged to consider whether disclosure of the information would be in the public interest before refusing to supply the information. Therefore the Council has taken the following factors into account:

Factors for disclosing information

- To release the information would be in the spirit of openness and transparency in which the Council operates
- The information is of interest to some members of the public
- Members of the public will be more informed about the non-personal properties in the area

Factors for withholding information

- There is a strong public interest in avoiding the likely prejudice to the prevention of crime. Tackling crime involves a significant strain on public expense and it is in the public interest to ensure that public resources are used cost-effectively
- There is a public interest in ensuring that monies from the public purse, such as rebates on business accounts, are not fraudulently claimed and also a public interest in not making it easier for fraud to be committed
- City of Doncaster Council uses Rate Payer name and reliefs received to assist in data protection checks as part of our enquiries, providing this would increase ability of targeted fraud or impersonation to obtain refunds and reliefs
- Disclosure would allow malicious reporting of changes on accounts, as automation requires matches on information given and the information contributes to the current record
- Disclosure of the requested information would result in the need to implement disproportionate steps and additional expense to the public purse to counter an increased fraud risk that does not exist at present. The cost consequences of a successful fraudulent claim would:
 - have incurred the cost of paying out to the fraudster;
 - remain liable to the legitimate rate payer for an equivalent amount, raising the prospect of paying out twice; and
 - be faced with the cost (legal and incurrence of internal management time) of seeking to recover the funds wrongly paid to the fraudster.

It would not be in the public interest to expose it to such potential costs and expenses, given that they would be funded from the public purse.

Taking these factors into consideration, the Council has decided that the reasons for withholding the information outweigh those for disclosing it and we will not be providing the information at this time.

The City of Doncaster Council estimates that it has cost £49 to respond to this request for information.

Reviewing any decisions made:

If you are not happy with this reply you can ask us to review our response. To do this write to us within 40 working days of receiving your response at the address below or email FOIAppeals@doncaster.gov.uk

If you do not agree with the review decision you can apply to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision about our compliance or otherwise with the Freedom of Information legislation. Contact details for the ICO are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. www.ico.org.uk Telephone 0303 123 1113.

Yours faithfully,
Ellen Dook
Information Governance Officer
Corporate Resources
City of Doncaster Council

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