

Council Tax, Business Rates and Benefits

Your Information

For the purposes of data protection laws, the Council is the data controller for the processing of your information and registered with the Information Commissioner's Office.

The information that you provide will be processed in accordance with the provisions of data protection laws and relevant legislation. The Council has a duty to protect public funds it administers and may use information held about you for the prevention and detection of fraud and other lawful purposes.

Sharing your information

We may share your information with other sections of the Council and with third parties, but only where it is necessary, either to comply with a legal obligation, or where permitted under data protection law, such as for purposes of fraud and crime prevention.

Information collected by Council Tax, Business Rates or Benefits is shared with, and obtained from any one of the following services listed below depending upon the specific circumstances regarding your claim:

- Housing Services
- Housing Benefits Service
- Electoral Registration Services
- Planning & Building Control
- Enforcement Teams
- Accountancy Reconciliation Team
- Shared Anti-Fraud Service
- Annual Billing Services carried out on behalf of the Council.
- Single Person Discount Review & Empty Homes Review Services carried out on behalf of the Council.
- Enforcement Agents approved by the Council
- Judicial Agencies e.g. Courts, Tribunals
- Police
- Other Local Authorities
- Immigration Service
- Government Departments e.g. HMRC, DWP, MHCLG
- Contractors providing revenues and benefits services (e.g. off-site processing, personal budgeting support, emergency food provision, etc.) & IT services
- Elected Members

We will not share your information with any third parties for marketing purposes. We do not solely use computers to make any decisions about you, and where applicable, you can appeal any decisions we make.

We will not send your information to other countries, without your consent, unless where legally required to do so, or to fulfil our statutory obligations.

Live Data use

Revenues & Benefits teams use DWP data for live testing to ensure accurate and efficient processing of Benefits & Council Tax Support. The data is typically used in the following ways.

- Verification of claims - which data is used to cross referenced with local records to verify income, benefits entitlement and change in circumstances.
- Realtime information (RTI) - HMRC RTI data, accessed via DWP systems, help confirm employment income for claimants ensuring the correct benefit calculations are awarded.
- Universal credit (UC) DWP provides local authorities with live UC data, which allows us to automatically adjust housing benefit and council tax support.
- Fraud prevention and error reduction – Using real time DWP data we can detect potential fraud or discrepancies early reducing over payments or underpayments.

Data matching to prevent fraud

We may share information provided to us with other bodies responsible for auditing, administering public funds where undertaking a public function. We do this to prevent and detect fraud.

We participate in the Cabinet Office's National Fraud Initiative, a data matching exercise to assist in the prevention and detection of fraud. We are required to provide particular sets of data to the Minister for the Cabinet Office for matching for each exercise. Examples of data supplied include:

- Council Tax
- Housing Services

Data matching involves comparing computer records held by one body against other computer records held by the same or another body to see how far they match and enables potentially fraudulent claims and payments to be identified.

No assumption can be made as to whether there is fraud, error or other explanation until an investigation is carried out.

The use of data by the Cabinet Office in a data matching exercise is carried out with statutory authority under Part 6 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. It does not require the consent of the individuals.

Updates & new services

The council takes your privacy very seriously and will only use your information in order for the council to bill and collect the Council Tax and Business Rates and administer Benefit cases in accordance with the legislation.

However from time to time we would like to keep you informed by post, phone, text message, or when you contact the council, about exciting new offerings or services such as new payment methods, discounts or exemptions etc, or to advise you of new options available to customers, such as electronic billing, text reminders or setting up special arrangements, which we consider as our customers will be of interest to you.

You can always opt out from receiving any of our updates, at any time by emailing us:

- Council Tax: revenues@hertspartnership-ala.gov.uk
- Business Rates: Business.Rates@hertspartnership-ala.gov.uk
- Benefits: benefits@hertspartnership-ala.gov.uk

We will then stop sending you any further promotional letters, text messages or emails as soon as is reasonably practicable.

How long we keep your information?

We will endeavour to keep your information accurate and up to date and not keep it for longer than is necessary, in accordance with the Council's retention policy. For benefits, council tax and business rates, we retain your information for the following periods set out below:

Benefit Claims

Live claims: All documents are kept for the duration of live claims
Closed claims: 6 years after the year in which the claim is audited

Council Tax and Business Rates

Live accounts: All documents are kept for the duration of live accounts
Closed accounts: 6 years after the year in which the account is audited

To help us keep your information up to date please:

- give us accurate information
- tell us as soon as possible about any changes to your personal information
- tell us if you notice mistakes or inaccuracies in the information we have about you

Your Rights

You have a legal right to request access to your information we hold and have the right to object to processing of your information. In some circumstances, you can request having incorrect information amended, blocked or removed.

You can also request the deletion of your information we hold, subject to certain restrictions that may prevent us from doing so and request copies of your personal information in an easily readable format to use with other organisations. Please visit the council's website for further details.

To request access to, or cease the processing of your information, or to report inaccuracies, or raise a concern please contact us:

- For Council Tax: revenues@hertspartnership-ala.gov.uk
- For Business Rates: Business.Rates@hertspartnership-ala.gov.uk
- For Benefits: benefits@hertspartnership-ala.gov.uk