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**Comprehensive Guidance on Data Protection Fees for Local Councils**

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**Introduction**

Local councils, including town, parish, and community councils, are required by law to pay a data protection fee to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) if they process personal data, unless exempt. This guide provides a detailed overview of why councils must pay this fee, the cost involved, and the process for payment.

**Why Councils Must Pay Data Protection Fees**

The ICO enforces the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018). These regulations ensure the protection of personal data processed by organizations. The data protection fee funds the ICO’s work in providing advice, support, and ensuring compliance with data protection laws.

**Legal Requirement**

All organizations, including local councils, that process personal data must pay the data protection fee unless they qualify for an exemption. Failure to pay the fee can result in fines of up to £4,000.

**How Much is the Data Protection Fee?**

The fee amount depends on the size and turnover of your organization. For most local councils, the fee is either £40 or £60 annually. Councils paying by direct debit receive a £5 discount. To determine the exact fee for your council, visit the ICO’s fee calculator: [ICO Data Protection Fee](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-fee/).

**How to Pay the Data Protection Fee**

Paying the fee is straightforward and can be done online:

1. Visit the ICO’s payment page: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-fee/>
2. Follow the instructions to complete the payment. The process typically takes about 15 minutes.
3. For assistance, contact the ICO helpline at 0303 123 1113.

If you have already paid the fee or registered with the ICO, you do not need to take any action until your registration expires. The ICO will send a reminder six weeks before the expiration date, so ensure your contact details are up to date. Check your registration status here: [Register of Fee Payers](https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/what-we-do/register-of-fee-payers).

**Exemptions for Individual Councillors**

As of 1 April 2019, individual elected representatives, including councillors, are exempt from paying the data protection fee. This exemption covers MPs, MSPs, AMs in Wales, MEPs, elected councillors in county and district councils, London boroughs, parish councils, elected mayors, and police and crime commissioners.

However, if councillors process personal data outside their official roles, such as running a business or using CCTV for business purposes, they may still be required to pay the fee.

**Additional Resources and Information**

The ICO provides a variety of resources and tools to help local councils comply with GDPR and data protection requirements. For more information, visit:

* <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-fee/>
* <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/>
* <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-fee/self-assessment/>

For further assistance, you can contact the ICO helpline at 0303 123 1113.

This guide aims to ensure that local councils understand their obligations regarding data protection fees and can efficiently manage their compliance with the regulations.