

POLICY:	FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY
Policy number:	FOI / 25 / v.14
Available to:	All Staff, Councillors & Public
Supersedes Version:	Freedom of Information Policy – 14 th May 2025
Approved by:	Full Council
Approval date:	20 th October 2025
Review due:	May 2026

1. Description

A Freedom of Information (FOI) Policy sets out how a town council complies with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) in the UK.

2. Purpose of this policy

The purpose of this Freedom of Information Policy is to:

Promote openness and transparency – ensure that information held by the Town Council is accessible to the public wherever possible.

Comply with the law – demonstrate the council's commitment to meeting its legal obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, and related legislation.

Support accountability – allow residents and stakeholders to see how decisions are made, how public money is spent, and how services are delivered.

Provide clear guidance – explain how individuals can access information, what they are entitled to, and the circumstances where information may be withheld.

Build trust – strengthen public confidence in the council's work by operating in an open and fair manner.

3. Scope

This Freedom of Information Policy applies to:

The Town Council – covering all information created, received, or held by the Council in connection with its official duties.

All Councillors, staff, and contractors – everyone working for or on behalf of the Council must comply with this policy when handling information.

All recorded information – including paper documents, electronic files, emails, audio and video recordings, photographs, and any other material held by the Council, regardless of format.

Publication Scheme information – documents and records made routinely available to the public. This scheme will enable members of the public to view and access information held by the Town Council.

Information requests – any written request from a member of the public for recorded information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

Exclusions:

Personal data covered by the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR (processed separately under data protection policies).

Information legitimately withheld under FOIA exemptions or EIR exceptions (e.g., confidential, commercially sensitive, or security-related information).

Verbal requests for information (FOIA requires written requests, though reasonable assistance will be given where needed).

4. Procedure

4.1 Obtaining Information and Information Held

There are three ways to obtain information:

a) Town Council web site

The web site holds the type of information which the Council routinely publishes e.g. minutes and agendas. The information you want may already be included in the publication scheme – so please check the documents on the web site first.

b) Inspect Documents held by the Clerk

If you wish to view certain documents, you should contact the Clerk, either via the facility on the web site or by telephone, or in writing. Some documents require some time to locate, so it may be necessary to make an appointment. Please note hours of work are Monday or Friday, between 9.30am and 4.00pm

c) Individual Written Request

If the information is not included in the publication scheme or on the web site, you may send a written request to:

- The Town Clerk, The Guildhall, Mill Street, Ludlow
- Your request must include your name, address for correspondence, and a description of the information you require.

4.2 Council's Response to a Written Request

Within 20 working days of receipt of your written request the Council will:

- confirm to you whether or not it holds the information
- advise you if a fee will be charged
- provide you with the information (after any relevant fee has been paid) unless an exemption applies (see 'Exemptions' paragraph below).

4.3 Fees

The Freedom of Information Act only allows the Council to charge for answering Freedom of Information requests in the following circumstances:

- a) Disbursement costs such as printing, photocopying and postage; and
- b) When estimated staff costs involved in locating and or compiling the information exceed £450. Under these circumstances, the Council can refuse the request on grounds of cost, or charge the applicant £20 per hour, plus disbursements for the estimated work.

For the majority of requests, or a series of requests from the same applicant within a 12-month period, it is expected that the charge for locating and compiling information will be less than £450 and therefore, except for disbursement costs, no reimbursement can be sought. However, where costs are estimated to exceed £450 (based on an hourly charge-out rate of £20), the Council can decide to:

- refuse the request; or
- comply with the request and charge for allowable costs as prescribed in the regulations; or
- comply with the request free of charge.

If the estimated cost of a request is more than £450, and it is decided to release the information and make a charge for the information then:

- A fee notice will be sent to the applicant requesting the appropriate fee.
- The request will not be answered until the fee has been received.
- If the actual cost of completing the request is more than the estimate then the Council will incur the additional cost.
- Where the cost is less than the estimated cost then the difference will be refunded to the applicant.

For disbursements costs, it is proposed that the Council will charge 10p per sheet for photocopying and printing documents and recover the actual cost of postage or any other transmission costs from the applicant.

4.4 Exemptions

Some information may not be provided by the Council as there are 23 exemptions in the Freedom of Information Act, for example, personal data about individuals which is protected by the Data Protection Act 1998, or commercially confidential information.

4.5 Further Help

If you need help in accessing information from the Council under the Freedom of Information Act, please contact the Town Clerk (address as before). You will also find more detailed guidance on the website of the Information Commissioner.

4.6 Complaints

If you are dissatisfied with the response from the Council, then you should put your complaint in writing to the Clerk at the address above. If you are still dissatisfied, you may contact the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545700
Email: mail@ico.gov.uk

5. Legal

Freedom of Information Act 2000
Environmental Information Regulations 2004
Data Protection Act 2018

6. Other relevant policies

Model Publication Scheme
