Ashby Herringfleet & Somerleyton Parish Council

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

Ashby Herringfleet & Somerleyton Parish Council is committed to openness and transparency and has always been concerned to make relevant information available wherever possible to individuals who may request it, subject to safeguarding the privacy of individuals and to legitimate considerations of national security, law enforcement and commercial interests where relevant.

The Freedom of Information Act gives everyone a statutory right of access to information held by bodies such as the Parish Council.

Model publication scheme
The Parish Council has adopted the model publication scheme issued by the Information Commissioner's Office. There is a link to this scheme on the Parish Council page of the website. There is also a link to the Information Available Document, which shows how information about the Parish Council is made available. Much of the information is available via the website but if it is required in an alternative format please contact the Parish Clerk by email or post.

Making a request for information
Individuals or organisations may make a written request for other information which they believe the Parish Council holds. To request information under the provisions of the Act, and to help the Parish Council to help the applicant in identifying the precise information required requests should be submitted by email or post to the Clerk.
Applicants should be sure to include their name and valid postal address, as required under the Act, and a clear description of the information they are seeking. When making a request applicants can state a preference of how they want the information communicated to them. This could be by providing a hard copy, or an electronic copy of the information, providing them an opportunity to inspect a record containing the information or providing a digest or summary of the information. The Parish Council will try to meet applicant's preferences as far as is reasonably practical, or notify them if it cannot do so.

Responding to a request
The Parish Council will inform applicants in writing whether it holds the information requested and if so, provide it not later than 20 working days after receipt of the request.
The Freedom of Information Act does identify a number of categories of information which the Parish Council is not required to disclose under the Act. In this case, the Parish Council will write stating the exemption which provides the basis for refusal within the Act and why it applies to the information requested. The Parish Council will communicate this within the 20 working day time period.

Charges for providing information under the Freedom of Information Act
There is no 'flat rate' fee to receive information and in many cases it will be provided free of charge. However, it should be noted that if the information sought is not readily available in the applicant's preferred format, the Parish Council may charge a fee based on the costs associated with providing the information, for example photocopying and postage (known as 'disbursements'). The Freedom of Information Act does permit the Parish Council to refuse a

request if it estimates that it will cost in excess of the appropriate cost limit to fulfil that request.

Freedom of information Fees Notice

If an applicant is required to pay a fee for disbursements or because the costs exceed the appropriate limit, the Parish Council will write advising the fee payable within 20 working days of receipt of the request. This is known as a 'Fees Notice'. When an applicant is issued the Fees Notice, the 20 working day limit for responding stops, and will then resume when the Parish Council receives payment. If the Parish Council does not receive the fee within three months it is not obliged to comply with the request.

Complaints

If a request for information is refused a reason/explanation must be given. Appeals against refusal can be made using the Parish Council's Complaints Procedure, details of which are available on the website or from the Parish Clerk.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is responsible for enforcing the operation of the Act and issues may be raised with the ICO at any time.
More information can be found on the ICO website at www.ico.gov.uk or by writing to Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

This policy was adopted by Ashby Herringfleet & Somerleyton Parish Council on 12th May 2016
Policy reviewed September 2024
Next review due May 2027