



Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations Policy

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations there is a duty on public authorities generally to provide information to members of the public on request. This requirement is additional to any other statutory right to obtain information which members of the public or electors have.

Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council will comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2000, (and its successors) and Environmental Information Regulations the principles contained therein. These include:

- A general right of access to information held by public authorities subject to certain conditions and exemptions.
- A requirement for public authorities to consider the exercise of any discretion which they may have to disclose information.
- A duty on every public authority to adopt and maintain a scheme which relates to the publication of information by the authority and is approved by the Information Commissioner and to publish information in accordance with the scheme.

To satisfy the requirements of the Information Commissioner arising from the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council has formally adopted a Model Publication Scheme. This is explained in detail in the Town Council's Freedom of Information Procedure.



Freedom of Information Procedure

Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council is committed to complying with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), Environmental Information Regulations and related legislation. This legislation enables anyone, to request any recorded information held by, or on behalf of, the Town Council.

Information will be provided if it is held, unless one or more of the exemptions listed in the legislation applies. Information which is exempt does not have to be provided.

Responsibilities

All employees are responsible for ensuring that any request for information they receive is dealt with in line with the requirements of the FOIA and in compliance with this policy. The Council's Town Clerk manages and coordinates all requests for information.

Any requests for information should be sent directly to:

Town Clerk (FOI Officer)
Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council
74-76 Queensway
Bletchley
MK2 2SA
clerk@bletchleyfennystratford-tc.gov.uk

Where an applicant indicates that they would like the requested information in a particular form i.e. paper, electronic or inspection at Council offices, we will comply with their preference where reasonably practicable, taking into account all the particular circumstances, including cost.

Dealing with requests

The Council will provide advice and assistance to help people make requests under the FOIA. The Council aims to respond to all requests promptly and at any rate, within the statutory response period of 20 working days following receipt of a valid request. This timescale can be extended under specific circumstances, for example if further clarification is required or if an exemption applies and we are considering

whether or not it is in the public interest to disclose the information regardless of the exemption.

The Council aims to publish as much information as it can, both proactively and in response to requests under the FOIA; however exemptions will be applied where appropriate to ensure that information which is not suitable for publication is protected.

Written requests for information received by the Council via post, email or other means will be treated as requests under the FOIA in cases where the information is not already publicly available or routinely disclosed on request. There is no need for requests to indicate they are made under the FOIA; however applicants making requests must provide their real name and an address for correspondence (email or postal). If a request is unclear, we will ask for clarification as soon as we can to enable us to proceed with considering the request.

The Council reserves the right to refuse requests where the cost of providing the information would exceed the statutory cost limit. This limit is currently £450, which equates to 18 hours' work at a statutory rate of £25 per hour. Where we estimate that complying with a request will take more than 18 hours of officer time, we will try to assist applicants to make refined requests which are more manageable.

Relationship with other Data Protection Legislation

The Council is under a legal duty to protect personal data as required by current data protection legislation. The Council will carefully consider its responsibilities under this legislation before disclosing personal data about living individuals, including current and former officers, members, and users of its services.

The Council's Publication Scheme

The Council has adopted the Information Commissioner's Model Publication Scheme for Local Authorities and will maintain the scheme to ensure that the information it refers to is up-to-date.

All of the information referred to in the publication scheme is readily available to the public, either via the Council website, in hard copy on request or by inspection at Council offices. Some information contained within the scheme is only available on payment of a fee; all fees and charges are listed in the Council's Schedule of Charges within the publication scheme.

Charges

Any charges for information contained within the publication scheme are detailed within the scheme. Any other type of information will be provided electronically and free of charge where possible; however there may be circumstances where we need to charge for information e.g. if it is only available in paper form and there is a large amount of copying involved. If there will be a charge for disbursements e.g. photocopying or postage in order to provide the information, we will inform applicants

as soon as possible to see if they wish to proceed; however such charges may be waived if they amount to less than £10.

Charges under these circumstances will be calculated at a rate of 10p per sheet of A4 for photocopying; postage will be calculated using Royal Mail's postage rates at the time the request is dealt with. Any other similar charges which may arise e.g. larger paper sizes will be reasonable and be calculated on the basis of the actual cost to the Council of providing the information to applicants.

Complaints about requests for information

Anyone who has made a request for information to the Council under the FOIA is entitled to request an internal review if they are unhappy with the way their request has been handled. Any internal review will consider whether or not the request was handled appropriately, in line with the requirements of the FOIA. Applicants wishing to ask for an internal review must do so within 40 working days of the date of the Council's response to their request.

The Council aims to respond to internal reviews within 20 working days of receipt.

Anyone who is unhappy with the outcome of an internal review is entitled to complain to the Information Commissioner and details of the how to do this are provided on our website and in our decision notices.

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