

Bowes Parish Council

Publication Scheme and Freedom of Information Act Policy

Introduction

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act) provides the public with a general legal entitlement to view all recorded information held by the Parish Council subject to certain exemptions. The public will have the right to view all the information in the Council's Publication Scheme. The Parish Council is committed to be an open organisation, one that the public can trust and have confidence in its ability to deliver its services to them. Failure to comply with this policy could have serious consequences for the Council, in the release of inappropriate material or the withholding illegally of information and the attendant adverse publicity and possible legal censure.

Bowes Parish Council Policy

Bowes Parish Council will:

- Comply with the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) 2000;
- Maintain a Publication Scheme that provides information, which is readily accessible on the receipt of a FOI request;
- Respond within 20 working days to straightforward written requests. However, if necessary, this timescale will be extended to consider a Public Interest Test. If the deadline is not expected to be met, the applicant will be advised of the reasons for the delay and the anticipated reply date;
- Continue to protect the personal data entrusted to it, by disclosing that information only in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998;
- Keep on file a copy of the request and response;

- Be aware of the definition of “*complex requests*” and the escalation procedure and not refuse requests for information in whole or in part;
- Apply the exemptions provided in the FOI Act and, where qualified exemptions exist, disclose the information unless the balance of public interest lies in withholding it;
- Pro-actively publish and make information readily available in accordance with the Publication Scheme;
- Review complaints about the release or otherwise of information by referring them to the Parish Clerk and remind requestors that they can appeal such decisions to the Information Commissioner;
- Ensure that all permanent and contract staff and elected members are aware of their obligations under FOI and will include FOI education in the induction of all new staff;
- Charge for information requests in line with the FOI Fees Regulations or other applicable regulations, including the Data Protection Act 1998; and
- Apply the “appropriate limit” in the regulations. Where the cost of complying with the request exceeds this, we will issue a refusal notice inviting the requestor to refine their request.

Bowes Parish Council Publication Scheme

The Scheme provides a list of all the information the Parish Council makes routinely available, explains how it can be accessed and whether a charge is made for it.

Manner of publication

Bowes Parish Council endeavour to ensure that all sections of the community can access the Council’s information, and systems are in place to make the listed information available to the public as easily as possible. Where possible, information has been placed on the Council’s website at www.bowesparishcouncil.gov.uk Where this is not possible the information is available from the Clerk (Ross Woodley) by e-mail or paper copies can be sent through the post. Please e-mail clerk@bowesparishcouncil.gov.uk If you are unable to e-mail then please write to the Clerk at 33, Milbank Court, Darlington, DL3 9PF.

Information	How the information can be obtained	Cost
<p>Class1 - Who we are and what we do</p> <p>Description of the Council, Location and Contact Details. List of councillors. (current information only)</p>	Website	<p>Free on-line. Hard copy Actual cost of Royal Mail 2nd Class Postage plus 30p per sheet to cover paper and printing</p>
<p>Class 2 – What we spend and how we spend it (Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts awarded and financial audit) Current and previous financial year as a minimum</p>	Website - monthly budgetary control reports in agenda packs and financial section of website.	<p>Free on-line. Hard copy Actual cost of Royal Mail 2nd Class Postage plus 30p per sheet to cover paper and printing</p>
AGAR and report by auditor	Website	As above
Precept and Budget Setting Report	Website	As above
Policies and strategies including financial regulations and standing orders	Website	As above
<p>Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing including policies and procedures (Strategies, policies and procedures, internal and external audit reports, minutes of meetings)</p>	Website	<p>Free on-line. Hard copy Actual cost of Royal Mail 2nd Class Postage plus 30p per sheet to cover paper and printing</p>

Class 4 – How we make decisions (Decision making processes and records of decisions) Current and previous council year as a minimum Timetable of Meetings Agenda packs Minutes of Meetings (excluding information that is properly regarded as private to the meeting).	Website	Free on-line. Hard copy Actual cost of Royal Mail 2 nd Class Postage plus 30p per sheet to cover paper and printing
Class 5 – The services we offer (Information about the services we offer, including the scale of charges where applicable) Current information only	Website	Free on-line. Hard copy Actual cost of Royal Mail 2 nd Class Postage plus 30p per sheet to cover paper and printing
Allotments	Website	As above
Cemetery	Website	As above
Play Park	Website	As above

Appeal

If you are dissatisfied with the Council's response to your request, you have a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner at:
 The Information Commissioner's Office Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF. Telephone: 01625 545 700
 Website: www.ico.gov.uk

Date of Policy and Scheme: 19/3/26

To be formally approved at the next meeting and reviewed at the annual meeting each May.