

Snodland Town Council

Freedom of Information / SAR publication Scheme Policy

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This policy forms part of the Council's wider information governance framework and should be read alongside the Privacy Notices, Data Protection Policy, Records Retention and Disposal Policy, and IT and Cyber Security policies.

1. Introduction

Snodland Town Council is committed to openness, transparency, and accountability in the conduct of its business. This policy sets out how the Council makes information available to the public under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) through its Publication Scheme and how requests for information are handled.

This Policy is based on the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) Model Publication Scheme for Local Authorities and has been adopted by the Council.

The Freedom of Information Act gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities, including the Town Council. Further information on the act is available from the Information Commissioner's (ICO) website.

2. Relationship with Other Information Rights

Requests for information may fall under different legislative frameworks. The Council will consider each request and respond under the most appropriate legislation, including:

- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR)
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Requests by individuals for their own personal data will be handled as subject access. Requests (SARs) under UK GDPR and are not dealt with under this Policy.

3. The Publication Scheme

The Publication Scheme commits the Council to proactively publishing information in accordance with the ICO's model scheme. The scheme specifies:

- The classes of information the Council publishes or intends to publish
- How the information can be obtained
- Whether a charge applies

The Council will make information available unless:

- It is exempt from disclosure; or
- It is not held by the Council.

Information in draft form may be withheld where it is not intended for publication or remains subject to further development.

4. Classes of Information

The Council publishes information within the following standard classes:

Class 1 – Who We Are and What We Do

Information relating to the Council's constitution, membership, committees, and contact details.

Class 2 – What We Spend and How We Spend It

Information on budgets, precepts, accounts, audit, expenses, and financial policies.

Class 3 – What Our Priorities Are and How We Are Doing

Plans, strategies, performance information, and related reports.

Class 4 – How We Make Decisions

Agendas, minutes, reports, consultation responses, and decision-making processes.

Class 5 – Our Policies and Procedures

Council policies, procedures, and protocols.

Class 6 – Lists and Registers

Registers required by law and other routinely maintained lists.

5. Access to Information

Information published under the scheme is normally available:

- On the Council's website
- By inspection at the Council offices (by appointment)
- In hard copy, where appropriate

Where information is available electronically, this will normally be the preferred method of access. In exceptional circumstances, some information may be available only by inspection in person. Where this applies, contact details will be provided and an appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

Information will normally be provided in the language in which it is held, or in such other language as may be legally required. Where the Council is legally required to translate information, it will do so.

The Council will comply with its obligations under disability and discrimination legislation, and any other relevant legislation, when providing information in alternative forms or formats.

6. Requests for Information

The Council will respond to written requests for information in accordance with FOIA or EIR, as appropriate, within 20 working days, subject to any applicable exemptions or extensions permitted by law. Where information is already available through the Publication Scheme, the Council may direct applicants to the relevant source.

7. Exemptions and Refusals

Some information may be withheld where an exemption applies under FOIA or EIR. Where information is refused, the Council will:

- Explain the reason for refusal;
- Cite the relevant exemption; and
- Provide details of the applicant's right to request an internal review.

8. Charges

Most information published through the scheme is available free of charge. Where a charge applies, it will be calculated in accordance with the Council's schedule of charges and ICO guidance.

Charges may include:

- Photocopying
- Printing
- Postage

9. Disclosure log

As a matter of good practice, the Council maintains a disclosure log where appropriate, recording responses to information requests that may be of wider public interest.

10. Complaints and internal review

Applicants who are dissatisfied with the handling of a request may request an internal review. Requests for review should be submitted in writing to the CEO.

If an applicant remains dissatisfied following an internal review, they may complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

11. Review of the policy

This policy will be reviewed periodically and updated where necessary to reflect changes in legislation, guidance, or Council practices.

Appendix 1 – Publication Scheme

Information to be published	How the information can be obtained
Class 1: Who we are and what we do	
(Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts) This will be current information only. N.B. Councils should already be publishing as much information as possible about how they can be contacted.	Website / Hard copy
Who's who on the Council and its committees	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Contact details for the CEO and Council members (named contacts where possible with telephone number and email address) (if used))	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Location of main Council office and accessibility details	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
(Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit) Current and previous financial year as a minimum	Website Contact the CEO for a hard copy
Annual return form and report by auditor	Website Contact the CEO for a hard copy
Finalised budget	In Council minutes Contact CEO for hard copy
Precept	Council Minutes (usually January) Contact the CEO for a hard copy
Borrowing approval letter	No current loans
Financial Standing Orders and Regulations	Website Contact the CEO for a hard copy
Grants given and received	Website Contact the CEO for a hard copy
List of current contracts awarded and value of contract	Website Contact the CEO for a hard copy
Members' allowances and expenses	Travel expenses only, where applicable, in accordance with HMRC rates. Contact CEO for hard copy.

Expenditure over £500 (published in accordance with transparency requirements form part of the income and expenditure report)	Website Contact the CEO for a hard copy
Income over £500 (published in accordance with transparency requirements form part of the income and expenditure report))	Website Contact the CEO for a hard copy
Class 3: What our priorities are and how we are doing	
(Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews) Current and previous year as a minimum	Website Contact the CEO for a hard copy
Local Plans Neighbourhood Plan (where applicable)	Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council for Local Plan
Annual report to Town or community meeting (current and previous year as a minimum)	Website Contact the CEO for a hard copy
Class 4: How we make decisions	
Decision making processes and records of decisions	Website Contact the CEO for a hard copy
Timetable of meetings (Council and any committee/subcommittee meetings and town meetings)	Website and Notice Boards Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Agendas of meetings (as above)	Website and Notice Boards Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Minutes of meetings (as above) N.B: this will exclude information that is regarded as private to the meeting.	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Reports presented to Council meetings – From May 2026 N.B: this will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meeting.	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Responses to consultation papers	Website Contact the CEO for a hard copy
Responses to planning applications	Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Website.
Bye-laws	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Class 5: Our policies and procedures	
Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities Current information only	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Policies and procedures for the conduct of Council business: • Procedural standing orders	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy

• Financial Regulations • Committee and sub-committee terms of reference • Delegated authority in respect of officers • Code of Conduct • Other policies	
Policies and procedures for the provision of services and about the employment of staff: • Standard terms and conditions of employment (where applicable) • Internal instructions to staff and policies relating to the delivery of services • Equality and diversity policy • Health and safety policy • Recruitment policies (including current vacancies) • Policies and procedures for handling requests for information • Complaints procedures (including those covering requests for information and operating the publication scheme)	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Information security policy	Standard terms and conditions of employment (where applicable) and Data Protection Policy
Records management policies (records retention, destruction and archive)	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Data protection policies	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Schedule of charges (for the publication of information)	As per legislation
Class 6: List and registers	
Currently maintained lists and registers (as applicable)	Website Contact the CEO for a hard copy - some information may only be available by inspection
Assets register	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Disclosure log (indicating the information that has been provided in response to requests; recommended as good practice, but may not be held by parish and town councils)	Website Contact the CEO for a hard copy
Register of members' interests	Website Contact the CEO for a hard copy
Register of gifts and hospitality	Website Contact the CEO for a hard copy

Class 7 – The services we offer	
(Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters produced for the public and businesses). Current information only	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy Some information may only be available by inspection.
Allotments	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Burial grounds and closed churchyards	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Community Buildings	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Parks, playing fields and recreational facilities	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Seating, litter bins, clocks, memorials and lighting	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Bus shelters	Kent County Council
Markets N/A	
Public conveniences N/A	
Services for which the Council is entitled to recover a fee, together with those fees (e.g. burial fees)	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Streetlights	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy
Recycling	Kent County Council
Visitor information	Website Contact the Council Office for a hard copy

Schedule of charges:

This describes how the charges have been arrived at and should be published as part of the guide.

Type of charge	Description	Basis of charge
Disbursement cost	Photocopying @ 7p per sheet (black & white)	Approved fees and charges
	Photocopying @ 14p per sheet (colour)	Approved fees and charges
	Postage	Actual cost of Royal Mail standard 2nd class

Statutory fee	Statutory fees will apply if complying with a request would cost more than £450 (18 hours at £25ph). The Town Council can refuse the request outright or do the work for an extra charge	Freedom of Information Code of Practice 2018
Other	Examples may include staff time (internal or external at £25ph); cost of materials or hire of specialist equipment (for example rental or licensing) for specific activity of redaction	Freedom of Information Act 2000