



EARLS COLNE PARISH COUNCIL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 was passed on 30th November 2000 and came into full force on 1st January 2005. Under the Act public authorities have two main responsibilities – to produce a publication scheme (s19) and to deal with individual requests for information.

The scheme commits the Council to:

- Proactively publish information that is held and is covered by the definitions below.
- Proactively publish information in line with the statements contained within this scheme.
- Maintain and review the information covered by the scheme on a regular basis.

Gaining access to proactively published information

Wherever possible we will provide information through our website. Where information is only available in a non-electronic form or when an individual does not wish to access electronically, an individual can contact the Parish Council and ask for the information to be provided to them in an alternative, available format.

Some information may only be available to view in person at a Council's premises. In these circumstances an appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale. Where it is not reasonably possible for an individual to view the information in person, every effort will be made to find an alternative means of communicating the information.

In order to ensure maximum release some information may be omitted. This will happen when a prohibition on release exists for material contained in the original information, examples of which are personal data or commercially sensitive information. (The omitted information may still be requested under the right of access)

Information will generally be provided in English only. Where we are required under other statute to provide certain information in other languages, this information will be translated.

We also have obligations under the Disability and Discrimination Act to provide information in other formats. These guidelines will be adhered to when proactively providing information.

Charges may be made for proactively published Information and these can be found in our document "Earls Colne Parish Council – Publication Scheme".

Information which is published and accessed electronically will be provided free of charge. Any charges made for accessing and receiving information will be justified and transparent. Charges may be made for;

- Expenditure incurred such as the photocopying of non-electronic multiple copies
- Postage and packaging

If a charge is to be made, the individual will be informed of the charge and why it is to be incurred prior to the information being provided. Payment may be requested prior to release of the information.

Promotion of access

We will ensure Parishioners are aware of the information we make readily available and that they may request information which is not provided for in the scheme.

We will provide our complaints procedures for an individual who is dissatisfied with the service or quality of routinely published information.

Information Classes

The classes are:-

1. Who we are and what we do. Organisational information, locations and contacts, constitutional and legal governance.
2. What we spend and how we spend it. Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts.
3. What our priorities are and how we are doing. Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.
4. How we make decisions. Policy proposals and decisions. Decision making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultations.
5. Our policies and procedures. Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.
6. Lists and Registers. Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the authority.
7. The Services we Offer. Advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets, transactions and media releases. A description of the services offered.

The classes of information will not generally include:

- Information, the disclosure of which is prevented by law, or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act.
- Information in draft form.
- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files which have been placed in archive storage, or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

How to make a Freedom of Information Request

The Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act gives you the right to ask Earls Colne Parish Council for all the recorded information they have on any subject. Anyone can make a request for information – there are no restrictions on your age, nationality or where you live.

Your request will be handled under the Data Protection Act if you ask for information about yourself.

How to make an FOI request

You can contact the Parish Council directly by letter or email to make a freedom of information (FOI) request. When making your request, you must include:

- your name
- an address where you can be contacted
- a detailed description of the recorded information you want

Most requests are free but you might be asked to pay a small amount for photocopies or postage.

You should receive the information within 20 working days. If the Parish Council needs more time, the Clerk will contact you and tell you when you can expect the information.

How you can receive the information

You can ask for the information in a number of different formats:

- paper or electronic copies of any original documents
- audio format
- large print

Depending on the nature of your request, you can ask for all the information or just a summary.

If your request is turned down

Some sensitive information might not be available to members of the public. If this is the case, the Parish Council will tell you why we have withheld some or all of the information you requested.

The Parish Council can turn down your request if we think it will cost them more than £450 to deal with your request. In this instance, we might then ask you to be more specific so we can provide the information you're looking for.

If the Parish Council doesn't provide you with the information you request, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office.

Approved by Full Council – 15th July 2020
Review frequency – Annual