

Long Preston Parish Council

Access to Information Policy

Adopted July 2012

Information held by the Council can be accessed on one of three ways:

- Via the documents published by the Council as part of the Model Publication Scheme adopted by the Council on 17th January 2011;
- Via a Freedom of Information request
- Via a request made under the Data Protection Act 1998

Model Publication Scheme

The Parish Council adopted the Model Publication Scheme with effect from 1st January 2009. This scheme will enable members of the public to view and access information held by the Parish Council. The Council aims to implement publication of all documentation under the Model Publication Scheme with an objective of completion by the end of the 2012/13 financial year.

Freedom of Information

It is intended that all Council information which is not subject to exemption will be posted on the Council's website and therefore the Council is unlikely to hold any further information than that already published.

Applicants to the Council for information will be reported in full at the next meeting of the Parish Council. Where a request for information is received and makes a request for information which appears to be exempt, partially exempt or qualified, the Clerk will seek a resolution of the Council (or any sub-committee set up for the purpose of such requests) as to the response.

Fees

The Act only allows the Council to charge for answering Freedom of Information requests in the following circumstances:

1. Disbursement costs such as printing, photocopying and postage; and
2. When estimated staff costs involved in locating and or compiling the information exceed £450. Under these circumstances, the Council can refuse the request on the grounds of cost, or charge the applicant £20 per hour, plus disbursements for the estimated work.

For the majority of requests, or a series of requests from the same applicant within a 12

month period, it is expected that the charge for locating and compiling information will be less than £450 and therefore, except for disbursement costs, no reimbursement can be sought. However, where costs are estimated to exceed £450 (based on an hourly charge-out rate of £20), the Council can decide to:

- refuse the request; or
- comply with the request and charge for allowable costs as prescribed in the regulations; or
- comply with the request free of charge.

If the estimated cost of a request is more than £450, and it is decided to release the information and make a charge for the information then:

- A fee notice will be sent to the applicant requesting the appropriate fee.
- The request will not be answered until the fee has been received.
- If the actual cost of completing the request is more than the estimate then the Council will incur the additional cost.
- Where the cost is less than the estimated cost then the difference will be refunded to the applicant.

For disbursements costs, it is proposed that the Council will charge 10p per sheet for photocopying and printing documents, and recover the actual cost of postage or any other transmission costs from the applicant.

Exemptions

Some information may not be provided by the Council as there are 23 exemptions in the Freedom of Information Act, for example, personal data about individuals which is protected by the Data Protection Act 1998, or commercially confidential information.

The Data Protection Act

The Council is a registered Data Controller, which means that it is registered with the Information Commissioner as holding personal data about individuals. The Council has adopted a policy on data handling. Individuals have the right to ask the Council what personal information is held about them (asking for information held about another person is a Freedom of Information request and will be dealt with under those procedures).

Requests made under the Data Protection Act will be reported to the Council at the next available opportunity. The applicant will be asked to prove their identity before any information is released – in order to check that the person making the request is in fact the person whose data is being requested.