



HEACHAM PARISH COUNCIL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 POLICY STATEMENT

Introduction

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) was passed on 30 November 2000. The Act gives a general right of access to all types of 'recorded' information held by public authorities, subject to certain exemptions, and places a number of obligations on public authorities. The exemptions are designed to protect confidential or other information where disclosure may prejudice the interests of the State or of third parties.

This policy statement sets out the arrangements that Heacham Parish Council has made to ensure compliance with the Act.

Policy

Heacham Parish Council is committed to full compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the main features impacting on Parish Council's procedures being:

- to facilitate a general right of access to information held by Heacham Parish Council in the course of carrying out public functions, subject to certain conditions and exemptions;
- in relation to most exempt information, the information must nonetheless be disclosed unless the public interest in maintaining the exemption in question outweighs the public interest in disclosure.
- to adopt a scheme for the publication of information. The scheme, which has been approved by the Information Commissioner, specifies the classes of information Heacham Parish Council intends to publish, the manner of publication and whether the information is available to the public free of charge or on payment of a fee.
- To make as much information as is reasonably possible, taking into account cost, resources, confidentiality and third party rights through the Council's Publication Scheme

Roles and Responsibilities

The Clerk, in consultation with the Financial and General Purposes Committee, is responsible for determining the approach that shall apply to information held by Heacham Parish Council and for establishing procedures and guidance for administering requests for information in compliance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The Clerk has the authority for overseeing Freedom of Information and is responsible for:

- Ensuring that information held fully complies with the Policy and procedures set by the Council, including information processed by contractors, partners or other bodies working under service level agreements.

- Ensuring that staff are aware of the Policy, procedures and guidance laid down by the Council and for checking that they understand and appropriately apply procedures and guidance in carrying out their day to day work.
- Processing information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the policies, procedures and guidance that are laid down by the Council.

The Clerk provides a point of contact for Councillors and members of staff at the Parish Council who may require advice on Freedom of Information Act matters. **The Clerk** will, where possible, provide advice directly on FOIA matters , seek advice from other bodies or refer matters to the Information Commissioner for advice.

Monitoring, review and evaluation

Heacham Parish Council will maintain a register of all requests made for information under the Freedom of Information Act and the action taken on each application, which will be logged on to the central register as a request is processed. The register will identify whether the same or similar information has previously been requested and provided, or refused and the reasons for refusal. This will ensure consistency in dealing with similar requests and identify repeated, duplicate or vexatious requests. It will also identify recurring requests for the, same or similar information not already published. Heacham Parish Council reserve the right to publish completed responses to requests for information (less any elements that would infringe the Data Protection Act) through the Publication Scheme. Performance in dealing with such requests will be monitored by the Clerk who will report to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Heacham Parish Council will put in place procedures for systematically reviewing its arrangements for administering and managing requests for information. These procedures will include systems for auditing compliance with the Act by Heacham Parish Council.

Heacham Parish Council will maintain a register of all written complaints received about its Freedom of Information arrangements and will ensure that any learning points that arise from such complaints are used to improve related policies, procedures and guidance.

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years to ensure that it remains up to date, effective and takes account of emerging good practice. Where new legal directions come into force, the policy will be reviewed in line with the commencement date of that legislation.

Cllr D Rawnsley
Chairman

Mrs S Eke
RFO / Clerk

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