



CHIPPENHAM
TOWN COUNCIL

Improving the quality of town life

Freedom of Information Policy

Author: Chief Executive

Responsibility: Strategy and Resources Committee

Date Adopted: December 2025

Review Date: 2028

Amendments:

Policy Statement

This policy is a guide on how to handle all requests for information to Chippenham Town Council. The Council will process requests for information in line with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018.

Introduction

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives a general right of access, by any individual or corporate body, to all types of recorded information held by public bodies such as local councils and parish meetings. Individuals also have the right to access information about themselves, which is held on computer, and most paper files under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018. This is known as the "subject access right".

These acts allow access to all the types of information held whether personal or non-personal. This may include information about third parties but account must, of course, be taken of the GDPR 2018 before releasing any such personal information.

The purpose of the Freedom of Information Act is to give the public greater access to information about the workings of government and public bodies. It is to make public bodies accountable to the public and enable transparency in the operation of public bodies. This policy may want to be read in conjunction with other Chippenham Town Council's other policies, such as the Data Protection Policy.

Scope of the Policy

The policy applies to all employees of Chippenham Town Council (herein referred to as "the Council").

Review Statement

This policy has been prepared considering prevailing legislation and recognised good practice. New legislation requirements or changes in current legislation may necessitate the review of this policy document. The council will continue to review and amend all/part of this policy on a regular basis. It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that the copy of the policy being referred to is the most up-to-date version.

Equality

In putting the procedure into practice, no aspect of the procedure will discriminate on the grounds of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, religion, politics, marital status, disability, union membership or any other grounds likely to place any employee at a disadvantage.

The Model Publication Scheme

The Town Council's model publication scheme details how certain classes of information can be accessed and enables members of the public to view and access information held by the Town Council, it is attached to this policy at **APPENDIX A**.

Obtaining Information and Information held

There are three ways to obtain the information:

1. Town Council website - www.chippenham.gov.uk

The website holds the type of information which the Council routinely publishes e.g. minutes and agendas. The information needed may already be included in the publication scheme; so, it is advised to check the documents on the website first.

2. Inspect Documents held by the Chief Executive

Anyone wishing to view certain documents, should contact the Chief Executive, via email to enquiries@chippenham.gov.uk or by telephone or writing to the Town Council, all contact details are available on the website. Some documents require some time to locate, so it may be necessary to make an appointment. Hours of work are:

- Monday to Thursday, between 9.00am and 4.30pm
- Friday, between 9.00 am and 4.00pm

3. Individual Written Request

If the information is not included in the publication scheme or on the website, a written request can be sent to:

- The Chief Executive, Chippenham Town Council, Town Hall, High Street, Chippenham, SN15 3ER
- Requests must include name, address for correspondence, and a description of the information required.

Council's Response to a Written Request

The Council will acknowledge a request under the Freedom of Information Act as soon as practicable, outlining the deadline date a response will be delivered. Within 20 working days of receipt of the written request the Council will:

- confirm whether or not it holds the information
- advise if a fee will be charged
- provide the information (after any relevant fee has been paid) unless an exemption applies (see 'Exemptions' paragraph below).

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 (black and white) and 20p (colour) 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 General Data Protection Regulations 2018, or commercially confidential information.

Further Help

If you are not satisfied with the response to your request from the Council under the Freedom of Information Act, you may request an internal review. The response will be reviewed by an independent officer. The conclusion of the internal review process is the final step of the process within the Council's remit. If you are not satisfied, please refer to the complaints process outlined below, to be sent directly to the Information Commissioner's Office. Detailed guidance can also be found on the website of the Information Commissioner: <http://www.ico.org.uk/>

Complaints

Complaints linked to dissatisfaction with the response from the Council, should be made in writing to the Chief Executive at the address above. If complaints cannot be resolved the Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113 (local rate) or 01625 545 745

Email: mail@ico.gov.uk

Further information on the Information Commissioner's Office can be found on the website at www.ico.org.uk

Further Information

Employees wishing for further information or clarification on any part of this policy, should contact their line manager.

APPENDIX A

Information available from Chippenham Town Council under the Freedom of Information Act model publication scheme

This template guide covers only information we currently hold. If we do not hold some of the information listed below, we will mark it as 'not held' in the table.

Information to be published	How the information can be obtained	Cost
Class 1 - Who we are and what we do (Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts) Current information only	(hard copy or website)	
List of Council members and their responsibilities as well a list of Council Committees Details of any representation on local public bodies	Website	None
Postal and email address Contact details for Chief Executive and Council members Where possible, provide named contacts including contact phone numbers and email addresses	Website	None
Location of main Council office and accessibility details	Website	None
Staffing structure	Website	None
Class 2 - What we spend and how we spend it (Financial information about projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit) Current and previous financial year as a minimum	(hard copy or website)	
Statement of accounts and internal audit report in the format included in the Annual Return form	Website	None

Finalised budget	Website	None
Precept	Website	None
Borrowing Approval letter	Not held, information on outstanding loans is published on the Website	
All items of expenditure above £100 <i>(Local Government Transparency Code 2014, this council publishes its expenditure that exceeds £500.)</i>	Not held/Expenditure over £500 on website	None
Financial Standing Orders and Regulations	Website	None
Grants given and received	Website	None
List of current contracts awarded and value of contract	Website	None
Members' allowances and expenses	Website	None
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	(hard copy or website)	
Annual governance statement in format included in the Annual Return form	Website	None
Corporate Strategic Plan	Website	None
Annual Report to Parish or Community Meeting	Website	None
Quality status	Website	None
Local charters drawn up in accordance with DLUHC's guidelines	Not Held	None
Data Protection impact assessments (in full or summary format) or any other impact assessment (eg Health & Safety Impact Assessment, Equality Impact Assessments etc), as appropriate and relevant	Website	None

Class 4 - How we make decisions (Decision making processes and records of decisions) Current and previous council year as a minimum	(hard copy or website)	
Timetable of meetings (Council and any committee/sub-committee meetings and parish meetings)	Website and Hard Copy	Printing Costs for Hard Copy
Agendas of meetings (as above)	Website	None
Minutes of meetings (as above) - exclude material that is properly considered to be exempt from disclosure	Website	None
Reports presented to council meetings - exclude material that is properly considered to be exempt from disclosure	Website	None
Responses to consultation papers	Website	None
Responses to planning applications	Website	None
Bye-laws	Hard Copy	Printing Costs for Hard Copy
Class 5 - Our policies and procedures (Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities) Current information only	(hard copy or website)	
Policies and procedures for the conduct of Council business: • Procedural standing orders • Committee and sub-committee terms of reference • Delegated authority in respect of officers • Code of Conduct • Policy statements	Website	None
Policies and procedures for the provision of services and about the employment of staff: • Internal instructions to staff and policies relating to the delivery of services • Equality and diversity policy • Health and safety policy • Recruitment policies and details of current vacancies	Website	None

• Policies and procedures for handling requests for information • Complaints procedures (including those covering requests for information and operating the publication scheme)		
Records management, personal data and access to information policies Include information security policies, records retention, destruction and archive policies, and data protection (including data sharing and CCTV usage) policies)	Website	None
Class 6 - Lists and Registers Currently maintained lists and registers only.	(hard copy or website; some information may only be available by inspection)	
Information legally required to hold in publicly available registers (in most circumstances existing access provisions will suffice)	Hard Copy, May only be available by inspection	Printing Costs for Hard Copy
Assets register, including details of public land and building assets	Hard Copy, May only be available by inspection	Printing Costs for Hard Copy
Disclosure log indicating the information provided in response to FOIA and EIR requests. These are recommended as good practice	Website	None
Register of members' interests	https://services.wiltshire.gov.uk/TownAndParish/ROI Managed by Wiltshire Council	
Register of gifts and hospitality	Hard Copy	Printing Costs for 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	(hard copy or website; some information may only be available by inspection)	
Allotments	Website	None
Burial grounds and closed churchyards	Website	None
Community centres and village halls	Website	None
Parks, playing fields and recreational facilities	Website	None
Seating, litter bins, clocks, memorials and lighting	Website	None

Bus shelters	Not held, Chippenham Town Council maintain bus shelters only.	None
Markets	Website	None
Public conveniences	Website	None
Agency agreements	Hard Copy, May only be available by inspection	Printing Costs for Hard Copy
Services for which we are entitled to recover a fee and details of those fees (e.g. burial fees)	Website	None
Additional Information Information not itemised in the lists above		
	Website	None

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 @ 10p per sheet (black & white)	Actual cost *
	Photocopying @ 20p per sheet (colour)	Actual cost
	Postage	Actual cost of Royal Mail standard 2 nd class
Statutory Fee		In accordance with the relevant legislation (quote the actual statute)
Other		

* the actual cost incurred