

WOODCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

Freedom of Information Policy

Policy Statement

Woodchurch Parish Council is committed to openness and transparency in the conduct of its business. The Council supports the objectives of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR), which promote a culture of openness and accountability among public authorities.

Purpose

This policy outlines how the Council will meet its obligations under the FOIA and EIR to provide access to recorded information held by the Council, either through its publication scheme or in response to individual requests.

Scope

This policy applies to all recorded information created, received, and maintained by Woodchurch Parish Council in the conduct of its business, regardless of the format (e.g. paper, digital, audio).

The Publication Scheme

Woodchurch Parish Council has adopted the model publication scheme developed by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), which is available on the Council's website or by request.

The scheme sets out:

- The classes of information the Council routinely publishes;
- How the information can be accessed;
- Whether any charge applies.

The Council regularly reviews the scheme to ensure that the information is up to date and relevant.

Accessing Information

Any person has a right to request access to information held by the Council. Requests should be:

- Made in writing (email or letter);
- Include the requester's name and contact details;
- Describe the information requested clearly.

Requests will be acknowledged and responded to within **20 working days**, as required by law.

Exemptions

Some information may be exempt from disclosure under the FOIA or EIR, for example:

- Personal data protected under the Data Protection Act 2018;
- Information that may prejudice law enforcement or commercial interests;
- Confidential or legally privileged material.

Where an exemption applies, the Council will explain the reason for withholding the information.

Charges and Fees

Information available through the publication scheme is provided free of charge unless stated otherwise. For bespoke requests, a reasonable fee may be charged for:

- Photocopying or printing;
- Postage and packaging;
- Staff time exceeding the FOIA's "appropriate limit" (currently £450).

The Council will inform the requester of any charges before proceeding.

Review and Complaints

If an applicant is dissatisfied with the Council's response or handling of a request, they may request an internal review by writing to the Clerk. If still dissatisfied, they can escalate the complaint to the **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)**.

Contact details:

Information Commissioner's Office

Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Website: www.ico.org.uk

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if legislation or guidance changes.

Signed:

Chair, Woodchurch Parish Council

Date: [Insert Date]

Clerk Contact Information:

Woodchurch Parish Council

[Clerk's Name]

[Address]

[Email]

[Phone]