



MINEHEAD TOWN COUNCIL

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act grants to members of the public rights of access to all kinds of recorded information held by a wide range of public authorities. Information about the Act is available from the Information Commissioner's Office at www.ico.gov.uk

Publication Scheme

The Act requires every public authority to adopt and maintain a generic model publication scheme which should be adopted and operated by all public authorities from 1 January 2009. Minehead Town Council adopted the generic model publication scheme at their Council Meeting on 12 November 2008. It is intended to provide everyone interested in the Council with a comprehensive guide to the information that the Council will automatically or routinely publish or otherwise makes available to the public.

Freedom of Information Requests and the Publication Scheme

It is important to note that a publication scheme simply sets out the information that is routinely available. Information that is not listed in the Information Available Guide of this document can still be requested and it will be made available unless it can be legitimately withheld. This can be done by making a written request to the Town Clerk who will reply within 20 working days after receipt of the request.

The Council's Commitment to the Act

The Council is committed to openness and accountability and already makes large amounts of information available to the public, through the website, via the telephone and by post. Should a personal visit to view information be requested, an appointment will be necessary.

MODEL PUBLICATION SCHEME

This model publication scheme has been prepared and approved by the Information Commissioner. It may be adopted without modification by any public authority without further approval and will be valid until further notice.

This publication scheme commits an authority to make information available to the public as part of its normal business activities. The information covered is included in the classes of information mentioned below, where this information is held by the authority. Additional assistance is provided to the definition of these classes in sector specific guidance manuals issued by the Information Commissioner.

The scheme commits an authority:

- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information, including environmental information, which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below
- To specify the information which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below
- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line with the statements contained within this scheme
- To produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public
- To review and update on a regular basis the information the authority makes available under this scheme
- To produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available
- To make this publication scheme available to the public.

Classes of information

Who we are and what we do

Organisational information, locations and contacts, constitutional and legal governance.

What we spend and how we spend it

Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts.

What our priorities are and how we are doing

Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.

How we make decisions

Policy proposals and decisions. Decision making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultations.

Our policies and procedures

Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.

Lists and registers

Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the authority.

The services we offer

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, or is otherwise properly considered to be protected from disclosure.
- Information in draft form.
- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage, or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

The method by which information published under this scheme will be made available

The authority will indicate clearly to the public what information is covered by this scheme and how it can be obtained.

Where it is within the capability of a public authority, information will be provided on a website. Where it is impracticable to make information available on a website or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the website, a public authority will indicate how information can be obtained by other means and provide it by those means.

In exceptional circumstances some information may be available only by viewing in person. Where this manner is specified, contact details will be provided. An appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

Information will be provided in the language in which it is held or in such other language that is legally required. Where an authority is legally required to translate any information, it will do so.

Obligations under disability and discrimination legislation and any other legislation to provide information in other forms and formats will be adhered to when providing information in accordance with this scheme.

Charges which may be made for information published under this scheme

The purpose of this scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by the authority for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.

Material which is published and accessed on a website will be provided free of charge.

Charges may be made for actual disbursements incurred such as:

- photocopying
- postage and packaging
- the costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information

Charges may also be made for information provided under this scheme where they are legally authorised, they are in all the circumstances, including the general principles of the right of access to information held by public authorities, justified and are in accordance with a published schedule or schedules of fees which is readily available to the public.

If a charge is to be made, confirmation of the payment due will be given before the information is provided. Payment may be requested prior to provision of the information.

Written requests

Information held by a public authority that is not published under this scheme can be requested in writing, when its provision will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

Freedom of Information

Information available from Minehead Town Council under the model publication scheme:

Class 1 - Who we are and what we do

1. Who's on the Council and its committees	Website - <u>Councillors & Committees</u>	Free
	Hard copy from Council	20p per sheet
2. Contact details for the Council	Website - Contact	Free
	Compliment slip from Council	Free
3. Location of main council office and accessibility details	Website - Contact	Free
4. Staffing Structure	Hard copy from Council	20p per sheet

Class 2 - What we do and how we spend the budget

1. Current and Previous Financial Year	Hard copy	20p per sheet
2. Annual return form and report by Auditor	Hard copy	20p per sheet
	Website	Free
3. Finalised Budget – Current Year	Hard copy	20p per sheet
	Website	Free
4. Precept	Hard copy	20p per sheet
5. Borrowing Approval Letter	Hard copy	20p per sheet
6. Financial Standing Orders and Regulations	Hard copy	20p per sheet
7. Grants given and received	see item 1	20p per sheet
8. List of current contracts awarded and value of contract	n/a	n/a
9. Members allowances and expenses	Hard copy	20p per sheet

Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are performing

1. Parish Plan	n/a	n/a
2. Annual Report current and Previous year	Hard copy	20p per sheet
	Website	Free
3. Quality Status	Hard copy	20p per sheet
	Website	Free
4. Local charters drawn up in accordance with DCLG guidelines	n/a	n/a

Class 4 – How we make decisions

1. Current and Previous year Council minutes	Website (latest minutes)	Free
	Previous minutes	20p per sheet
2. Timetable of meetings	Website	Free
3. Agendas of meetings	Website	Free
4. Minutes of committee meetings	Website	Free
5. Reports presented to council meetings	Hard copy	20p per sheet
	Website (included in minutes)	Free
6. Responses to consultation papers	Hard copy	20p per sheet
	Website (included in minutes)	Free
7. Responses to planning applications	Hard copy	20p per sheet
	Website (included in minutes)	Free
8. Bye Laws	Hard copy	20p per sheet
	Website (included in minutes)	Free

Class 5 – Our policies and procedures

Policies and Procedures for the conduct of Council Business

1. Procedural Standing Orders	Hard copy	20p per sheet
2. Committee and sub committee terms of reference	Included in item 1	20p per sheet
3. Delegated authority in respect of officers	Included in item 1	20p per sheet
4. Code of Conduct	Hard copy	20p per sheet
5. Policy Statements	Hard copy	20p per sheet

Policies and Procedures for the provision of services and about the employment of staff

6. Internal policies relating to the delivery of services	Hard copy	20p per sheet
7. Equality and diversity policy	Hard copy	20p per sheet
8. Health and Safety policy	Hard copy	20p per sheet
9. Recruitment policies	Hard copy	20p per sheet
10. Policies and Procedures for handling requests for information	Hard copy	20p per sheet
11. Complaints procedures	Hard copy	20p per sheet
12. Information security Policy	Hard copy	20p per sheet
13. Records Management policies (records retention, destruction and archive)	Hard copy	20p per sheet
14. Data Protection Policies	Hard copy	20p per sheet
15. Schedule of Charges for the publication of information	Hard copy	20p per sheet

Class 6 – Lists and Registers

1. Assets Register	Hard copy (and in Accounts)	20p per sheet
2. Register of Members Interests	Hard copy	20p per sheet
3. Register of gifts and hospitality	Hard copy	20p per sheet

Class 7 – The Services we offer

1. Allotments		n/a
2. Burial grounds and closed churchyards		n/a
3.		Free
		20p per sheet
4. Parks, playing fields and recreational facilities		Free
	Hard copy	20p per sheet
5. Seating, litter bins, clocks, memorials and lighting	Hard copy	20p per sheet
6. Bus Shelters	Hard copy	20p per sheet
7. Markets	n/a	n/a
8. Public Conveniences	Hard copy	20p per sheet
9. Agency agreements	n/a	n/a
10. Summary of services for which the council is entitled to recover a fee.	Website & viewable in Council Office	Free
	Hard copy	20p per sheet