

BRIDGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Information guide relating to the Freedom of Information Act

1. What is the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)?

The FOIA was introduced to make all levels of government more open to the public. The FOIA allows the public access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities (in this case Great Melton Parish Council). It allows access to information regardless of when the information was created or how long it has been held, and sets out exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities.

2. Who can ask for information?

Anyone can request information from the Parish Council provided the request satisfies all of the relevant conditions.

3. Does a reason for the request need to be given?

No, there is no obligation to provide a reason for your request, although it would help the Council if a reason was given to identify all the information relevant to your enquiry.

4. How do I ask for information?

Write to the Parish Clerk with your name, address and description of the information you are looking for.

5. What type of information can I ask for?

You can ask for any information, although there are limits on information the Council must provide. The Council is required by law to keep some types of information permanently, or for several years. Some information is routinely destroyed after a few days or weeks.

6. What does it cost to obtain the information?

The majority of costs for complying with requests will be met by the Council. The Act allows for public authorities to decline to comply with certain requests for information on the grounds of cost where these requests would be particularly expensive. It also allows for public authorities to charge for answering requests for information in certain circumstances.

Section 12 of the Act allows public authorities to refuse to answer requests for information if the cost of complying would exceed the 'appropriate limit' prescribed in the Regulations.

7. Can the Council refuse to give me information?

The Council might refuse your request if you ask for one of the types of information which are deemed as 'exempt' from the Right to Freedom of Information, for example:

- If the Council does not hold the information you have requested, or has not retained it.
- If providing you with the information would involve the Council in excessive cost or effort, or would disrupt services.
- If revealing the information is forbidden by law, or if the people who supplied the information expect us to keep it secret.

If we refuse your request, we will explain why.

Even if the information you have requested is 'exempt', the Council will still consider whether it would be in the public interest to release it.

8. What is the Publication Scheme?

The Council's Publication Scheme sets out what information it will make available as a matter of course, how and when it will do so and whether or not there will be a charge. The Publication Scheme is shown in the following pages in a table-format.

9. How long will I have to wait for the information?

The Council will provide the information within 20 working days of receiving your request.

If we ask you to pay a fee for the information requested, the 20 working-day time period will stop until you have paid the fee. You have up to 3 months to send the fee to the Council. When the Council receives your fee the 20 working-day time period will recommence.

If you do not pay the fee within 3 months the Council will close the file and you will not receive the requested information.

10. What can I do if I think my request has not been handled correctly?

If you feel that your request has been mishandled, please contact the Chairman of the Council. Your complaint will involve a review of the way your request was handled and whether any exemptions have been correctly applied.

If, following the review, you are still not satisfied with the way your request has been handled then you can contact the Information Commissioner.

11. Can I use the information freely?

How you use the information is up to you, but the Council, or the person who supplied the information to the Council, will still hold any copyright, and your use of the information is therefore limited by copyright law (broadly speaking, you can use it for research, for commercial purposes and private study, and for criticism, review and news reports).

12. Where can I obtain further information?

Further information on the FOIA is available on the Information Commissioner's website.

Publication scheme

| Information to be published | How the information can be obtained |
|---|---|
| Class 1 - Who we are and what we do (Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts) This will be current information only | Website, noticeboard or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Who's who on the Council and its committees | See Parish Councillor section of the website |
| Contact details for Parish Clerk and Council members (named contacts where possible with telephone number and email address (if used)) | Website, noticeboard or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Location of main Council office and accessibility details | Location details available on website and noticeboard or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Staffing structure | Only one member of staff (Clerk) |
| Class 2 – What we spend and how we spend it (Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit) | |
| Current and previous financial year as a minimum | Website or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Annual return form and report by auditor | Website or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Finalised budget | Website or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Precept | Information in January minutes each year (website) or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Borrowing Approval letter | N/A |
| Financial Standing Orders and Regulations | Website or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Grants given and received | Website - search minutes or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| List of current contracts awarded and value of contract | Hard copy/email from the Clerk/details in minutes (website) |
| Members' allowances and expenses | Hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing (Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews) | Website or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Parish Plan (current and previous year as a minimum) | N/A |
| Annual Report to Parish or Community Meeting (current and previous year as a minimum) | Website or hard copy/email from the Clerk |

| Information to be published | How the information can be obtained |
|--|--|
| Class 4 – How we make decisions (Decision making processes and records of decisions) Current and previous council year as a minimum | Website or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Timetable of meetings (Council, any committee/sub-committee meetings and parish meetings) | Website, noticeboard or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Agendas of meetings (as above) | Website, noticeboard or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Minutes of meetings (as above) | Website or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Reports presented to council meetings - This will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meeting | Website, hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Responses to consultation papers | In minutes available from the website or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Responses to planning applications | In minutes available from the website, available to read on Broadland & South Norfolk District Council's website or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Bye-laws | N/A |
| Class 5 – Our policies and procedures (Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities) Current information only | Website or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| 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 or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Policies and procedures for the provision of services and about the employment of staff: Internal policies relating to the delivery of services Equality and diversity policy Health and safety policy Policies and procedures for handling requests for information | Website or hard copy/email from the Clerk |

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| Complaints procedures | |
| Information security policy | Information given in Risk Management Policy |
| Records management policies (records retention, destruction and archive) | Covered in Data Protection Policy - Website or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Data protection policies – in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation | Website or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Schedule of charges (for the publication of information) | See below |
| | |
| Class 6 – Lists and Registers | N/A |
| Currently maintained lists and registers only | |
| Any publicly available register or list (if any are held this should be publicised; in most circumstances existing access provisions will suffice) | N/A |
| Asset Register | Website or hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Disclosure log (indicating the information that has been provided in response to requests; recommended as good practice, but may not be held by parish councils) | N/A |
| Register of members' interests | Link on Parish Council's website to Broadland & South Norfolk District Council's site or email/hard copy from the Clerk |
| Register of gifts and hospitality | Hard copy/email from the Clerk |
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| 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/email or website. Some information may only be available by inspection |
| Allotments | N/A |
| Burial grounds and closed churchyards | N/A |
| Community centres and village halls | N/A |
| Parks, playing fields and recreational facilities | N/A |
| Seating, litter bins, clocks, memorials and lighting | Hard copy/email from the Clerk |
| Bus shelters | N/A |
| Markets | N/A |
| Public conveniences | N/A |
| Agency agreements | N/A |
| A summary of services for which the council is entitled to recover a fee, e.g. burial fees | N/A |

Contact details

Clerk to the Parish Council

Contact information found on the Council's website and noticeboard.

Schedule of charges

| Type of Charge | Description | Basis of Charge |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Disbursement | Photocopying @ 27p per sheet (black & white) | Actual cost * |
| | Photocopying @ 80p per sheet (colour) | Actual cost * |
| | Postage | Actual cost of Royal Mail standard 2nd class |

* the actual cost incurred by the public authority

Document approved by the Parish Council on 12 June 2023

Next review due: May 2027 (or earlier if relevant legislation changes)