



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

Ashington Town Council is committed to complying with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and related legislation.

What is Freedom of Information?

The Freedom of Information Act gives you the right to request information held by the Council.

Scope

This policy applies to all recorded information the Council holds regardless of how it was created or received. It applies no matter what media the information is stored in and whether the information may be on paper or held electronically. The Act is fully retrospective.

Dealing with Requests

The Council offers advice and assistance to anybody who wishes to make a request for information. The Council is committed to dealing with requests within the statutory timescales of no more than 20 working days; however, this can be extended in specific circumstances. It should be noted that the Town Council operates a 5-day working week and that the 20 working days will be based upon this timescale.

The Council will claim exemptions as detailed within the Act whilst maintaining a commitment to openness, scrutiny, and the public interest. Where appropriate, requests made in writing will be treated as Freedom of Information requests.

There is no need for requests to indicate they are made under the Act. The Council reserves the right to refuse requests where the cost of supply of the information would exceed the statutory maximum (currently £450).

Adopting and Maintaining Publications Schemes

The Council has adopted a Publication Scheme and is committed to updating and maintaining it to keep it current and relevant. The Publication Scheme identifies many of the documents, policies, plans and guidance which are regularly asked for.

Material referred to within the publication scheme, and a copy of the scheme itself, is readily available. Where charges are applicable these are detailed within the Scheme. Officers of the Council will give advice and assistance on how to use the scheme as appropriate.

Relationship with the Data Protection Act

The Council is under a legal duty to protect personal data under the Data Protection Act. The Council will carefully consider its responsibilities under the Data Protection Act before releasing person data about living individuals, including current and former officers, Members, and users of its service.

Responsibilities

All staff and Members are responsible for ensuring that any request for information they receive are dealt with under the Act and in compliance with this policy. They are also responsible for good information handling practice and implementing good records management practices.

Vexatious and Repeat Requests

It should be noted that where repeated or vexatious requests are made with the aim of frustrating the Council's operations then these requests may be refused.

Contact Details

For advice and assistance please contact Ashington Town Council Offices, Town Hall, 65 Station Road, Ashington, Northumberland, NE63 8RX. Telephone 01670 624521 or email ashingtontowncouncil@gmail.com