West Mersea Town Council

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Reviewed: 13 August 2026
Next review: August 2027

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 was passed on 30th November 2000 and came into full force on 1st January 2005. Under the Act public authorities have two main responsibilities – to produce a publication scheme (s19) and to deal with individual requests for information.

The scheme commits the Council to:

- Proactively publish information that is held and is covered by the definitions below.
- Proactively publish information in line with the statements contained within this scheme.
- Maintain and review the information covered by the scheme on a regular basis.

Gaining Access to proactively published information

Wherever possible we will provide information through our website. Where information is only available in a non-electronic form or when an individual does not wish to access electronically, an individual can contact the Parish Council and ask for the information to be provided to them in an alternative, available format.

Some information may only be available to view in person at a Council's premises. In these circumstances an appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale. Where it is not reasonably possible for an individual to view the information in person, every effort will be made to find an alternative means of communicating the information.

In order to ensure maximum release some information may be omitted this will happen when a prohibition on release exists for material contained in the original information, examples of which are personal data or commercially sensitive information. (The omitted information may still be requested under the right of access) Information will generally be provided in English only.

Where we are required under other statute to provide certain information in other languages, this information will be translated. We also have obligations under the Disability and Discrimination Act to provide information in other formats. These guidelines will be adhered to when proactively providing information. Charges which may be made for proactively published Information, and these can be found in our Publication Scheme document.

Information which is published and accessed electronically will be provided free of charge. Any charges made for accessing and receiving information will be justified and transparent.

Charges may be made for:

- Information subject to a charging regime approved by parliament.
- Expenditure incurred such as the photocopying of non-electronic multiple copies.
- Postage and packaging.
- The viewing of information at an authority premises.

If a charge is to be made, the individual will be informed of the charge and why it is to be incurred prior to the information being provided. Payment may be requested prior to release of the information. Promotion of access We will ensure Parishioners are aware of the information we make readily available and that they may request information which is not provided for in the scheme.

We will provide our complaints procedures for an individual who is dissatisfied with the service or quality of routinely published information. The classes are:

1. **Who we are and what we do?**
   Organisational information, locations and contacts, constitutional and legal governance.
2. **What we spend and how we spend it.**
   Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts.
3. **What our priorities are and how we are doing.**
   Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.
4. **How we make decisions**.
   Policy proposals and decisions. Decision making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultations.
5. **Our policies and procedures**.
   Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.
6. **Lists and Registers.**
   Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the authority.
7. **The Services we offer**.
   Advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets, transactions and media releases. 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.
   - Information in draft form.
   - Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files which have been placed in archive storage or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

   How to make a Freedom of Information Request

   1. **The Freedom of Information Act**
      The Freedom of Information Act gives you the right to ask any public sector organisation for all the recorded information they have on any subject. Anyone can make a request for information – there are no restrictions on your age, nationality or where you live.
      Your request will be handled under the Data Protection Act if you ask for information about yourself.

   2. **Organisations you can request information from**
      You can request information from publicly funded organisations that work for the welfare of the whole population, e.g.:
      - government departments
      - local councils
      - schools, colleges and universities
      - health trusts, hospitals and doctors' surgeries

- publicly funded museums
- the police
- non-departmental public bodies, committees and advisory bodies

3. How to make an FOI request

You can contact an organisation directly by letter or email to make a freedom of information (FOI) request. When making your request, you must include:

- your name
- an address where you can be contacted
- a detailed description of the recorded information you want

Most requests are free, but you might be asked to pay a small amount for photocopies or postage. You will be told by the organisation if you have to pay anything.

You should receive the information within **20** working days. If the organisation needs more time, they will contact you and tell you when you can expect the information. You could check to see if the organisation you are making an FOI request to has given the information before as a result of someone else's request. Organisations may publish this information on their website.

4. How you can receive the information

You can ask for the information in a number of different formats:

- paper or electronic copies of any original documents
- audio format
- large print

Depending on the nature of your request, you can ask for all the information or just a summary. Make sure you check the copyright status of the information you receive if you plan to reproduce it.

5. **If your request is turned down**

Some sensitive information might not be available to members of the public. If this is the case, the organisation must tell you why they have withheld some or all of the information you requested.

An organisation can turn down your request if they think it will cost them more than £450 (£600 for a central government organisation) to deal with your request. They might then ask you to be more specific so they can provide the information you're looking for. If an organisation doesn't provide you with the information you request, you should first contact them and ask them to review their decision. If you are still not satisfied, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office.