



Freedom of Information Policy

Policy Statement

This policy is a guide on how to handle all requests for information to Arlesey Town Council. The Council will process requests for information in line with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the UK General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (UK GDPR).

Introduction The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives a general right of access, by any individual or corporate body, to all types of recorded information held by public bodies such as local councils and parish meetings. Individuals also have the right to access information about themselves, which is held on computer, and most paper files under the UK GDPR 2018. This is known as the "Subject Access Right" (SAR). These acts allow access to all the types of information held whether personal or non-personal. This may include information about third parties but account must be taken of GDPR 2018 before releasing any such personal information.

Obtaining Information

There are three ways to obtain the information:

1) Inspect Documents at the Town Council Offices

Some information may only be available by viewing in person. Where this manner is specified you should contact the Clerk, either by telephone, email or in writing. Some documents require some time to locate, so it may be necessary to make an appointment. This will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

2) Individual Written Request

If the information is not included in the Town Council publication scheme outlined below you may send a written request to: The Town Clerk, Arlesey Town Council, Community Centre, High Street, Arlesey, Beds SG15 6SN or by email to clerk@arlesey-tc.gov.uk Your request must include your name, address for correspondence, and a description of the information you require.

3) Visit the Town Council Website: www.arlesey-tc.gov.uk

Where it is within the capability of the council, information will be provided on its website. When an individual does not wish to access the information by the website, alternative means may be provided. 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.

Written Requests

Information held by a public authority that is not published under the publication scheme can be requested in writing and its provision will be considered in accordance with the

requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Within 20 working days of receipt of your written request the Council will:

- confirm to you whether or not it holds the information
- advise you if a fee will be charged
- provide you with the information (after any relevant fee has been paid) unless an exemption applies (see 'Exemptions' paragraph below).

Fees

The Act only allows the Council to charge for answering Freedom of Information requests in the following circumstances:

1. Disbursement costs such as printing, photocopying and postage; and
2. When estimated staff costs involved in locating and or compiling the information exceed £450. Under these circumstances, the Council can refuse the request on the grounds of cost, or charge the applicant £25 per hour, plus disbursements for the estimated work.

For the majority of requests, or a series of requests from the same applicant within a 12 month period, it is expected that the charge for locating and compiling information will be less than £450 and therefore, except for disbursement costs, no reimbursement can be sought.

However, where costs are estimated to exceed £450 (based on an hourly charge-out rate of £25), the Council can decide to:

- refuse the request; or
- comply with the request and charge for allowable costs as prescribed in the regulations; or
- comply with the request free of charge.

If the estimated cost of a request is more than £450, and it is decided to release the information and make a charge for the information then:

- A fee notice will be sent to the applicant requesting the appropriate fee.
- The request will not be answered until the fee has been received.
- If the actual cost of completing the request is more than the estimate then the Council will incur the additional cost.
- Where the cost is less than the estimated cost then the difference will be refunded to the applicant.

For disbursements costs, it is proposed that the Council will charge 15p per sheet for black and white photocopying and printing documents and £1 per sheet of colour copies and recover the actual cost of postage or any other transmission costs from the applicant.

Exemptions

Some information may not be provided by the Council as there are 23 exemptions in the Freedom of Information Act, for example, personal data about individuals which is

protected by the Data Protection Act 1998 and 2018, commercially confidential information or information provided under legal professional privilege.

Further Help

If you need help in accessing information from the Council under the Freedom of Information Act, please contact the Town Clerk (address as before). You will also find more detailed guidance on the website of the Information Commissioner <https://ico.org.uk>

Complaints

If you are dissatisfied with the response from the Council then you should put your complaint in writing to the Clerk at the address above. If you are still dissatisfied, you may contact the Information Commissioner using the contact details on the ICO website <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>

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