

Honeybourne Parish Council

Freedom Of Information Policy

Introduction

This Freedom of Information Policy sets out the arrangements under which information will be provided to applicants who request information in writing from Honeybourne Parish Council ('the Council') under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the Act") and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

Important Note: A request by an individual for personal information the Council holds about them is not covered under this policy but should instead be requested under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018. Please see the Council's Privacy Notice for details. Personal information does not include information about a deceased person.

Publication Scheme

The Freedom of Information Act requires the Council to publish a Publication Scheme and ensure it is available to view either on the Council's website: <https://honeybourne-pc.gov.uk/> or to obtain a hard copy by contacting the Clerk: clerk@honeybourne-pc.gov.uk

The Publication Scheme commits the Council to:

- **Proactively publish** or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information including environmental information, which is held by the council and falls within the classes set out below
- **Specify the information** held by the council which falls within the classes below
- **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
- **Review and update** on a regular basis the information the council makes available under this scheme
- **Produce a schedule** of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available
- **Make the publication scheme** available to the public

Classes of Information

1. Who the council is and what it does
2. What the council spends and how it spends it
3. What are the priorities of the council and how are these achieved
4. How council makes decisions
5. Council policies and procedures
6. Lists and Registers
7. The Services the Council offers

The classes of information will not generally include:

- Information the disclosure of which is prevented by law, or exempt under the Act
- Information in draft form, unless this contradicts legislation
- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files which have been placed in archive storage, is difficult to access, or has been disposed of under the Parish Council Document Retention Policy

Cost Limit Calculation

The £450 cost limit equals 18 hours of staff time at £25 per hour.

Activities that COUNT towards the limit:

- Determining whether we hold the information
- Locating the information or documents
- Retrieving the information or documents
- Extracting relevant information from documents

Activities that DON'T COUNT:

- Time spent deciding if exemptions apply
- Redacting (removing) exempt information
- Public interest testing
- Reading information to understand context
- Formatting or presenting information

How we estimate costs:

- As a small parish council with limited staff, we base estimates on our practical knowledge of our filing systems
- For clearly large requests, we may provide general estimates rather than detailed breakdowns
- We may conduct brief sampling exercises where proportionate
- Electronic searches are faster than manual file searches
- Estimates must be reasonable but don't require us to complete the work first
- We may suggest narrowing broad requests before providing detailed cost estimates

If a request would exceed £450:

- We will refuse the request under Section 12¹ of the Freedom of Information Act
- We will explain briefly why we believe it exceeds the limit
- We will suggest ways to narrow the request to make it manageable
- **We are not required to provide detailed cost breakdowns for refusals**
- As a small council with limited resources, we focus on providing information that can be accessed within reasonable limits

The publication scheme contains information relating to the charges that may be made for providing information that is not available online or is requested in a different format. These costs are subject to the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004.

Charges for Information

For requests under the cost limit (£450):

- Information available online: Free
- Photocopying: 15p per A4 sheet (Black & white)
- Printing: 15p per A4 sheet (Black & white)
- Postage: At actual cost
- Staff time: Cannot be charged

For requests over the cost limit (£450):

- We may refuse the request, OR

¹ The £450 cost limit is established under Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000¹ and The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004². (¹ Freedom of Information Act 2000, Section 12 ² SI 2004/3244)

- Offer to provide information at full cost including staff time at £25 per hour (as set by ICO regulations)

Procedure for Requesting Information

1. Making a Request

Applications requesting information should be in written form (letter or email) and sent to the Parish Council. The applicant must provide:

- **Name** (not required for environmental information requests)
- **Contact address or email**
- **Detailed description** of the information required
- **Preferred format** (if any) such as paper, electronic copies, or large print

Contact Details:

- **Email:** clerk@honeybourne-pc.gov.uk
- **Address:** Parish Clerk, Honeybourne Village Hall, Harvest Close, Honeybourne, Evesham, WR11 7HR

2. Acknowledgment Process

- Requests will be **date-stamped** upon receipt
- **Acknowledgment** sent within 5 working days where possible
- Acknowledgment will include a copy of this policy and ICO guidance
- Office closures may delay acknowledgment

3. Clarification of Requests

- Requests must include a **clear statement** of information required
- If unclear, we may ask for **more specific details** which may delay our response
- Parish Council staff will advise within **5 working days** whether additional information is needed

4. Response Process

- **Publication Scheme:** If information is already published online, applicants will be directed to the Council's website
- **Response time:** We aim to respond within **20 working days**
- **Payment required:** The 20 working-day period starts from receipt of payment (if applicable)
- **Exemptions:** We will advise if information is classified as exempt under the Act
- **Data Protection:** Information may be redacted to protect living individuals' privacy

5. Post-Response Actions

- **Publication:** A summary of FOI requests and responses will be published on the Council's website
- **Annual Review:** This Policy and Publication Scheme are reviewed annually

Important Limitations

- **Repeated requests:** The Council is not obliged to comply with repeated or vexatious requests
- **Exemptions:** Certain information may be exempt under the Freedom of Information Act
- **Data Protection:** Some information may need to be redacted to comply with UK GDPR

Appeals Process

If you are dissatisfied with our response:

1. **Internal Review:** Contact the Parish Clerk to request an internal review within 40 working days of our response
2. **External Appeal:** If still unsatisfied, you may appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office:
 - **Website:** www.ico.org.uk
 - **Helpline:** 0303 123 1113
 - **Address:** Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF

Best Practice Guidelines

DO:

- **Research first** - Check our website and Publication Scheme
- **Be specific** - Include dates, names, and clear descriptions
- **State clearly** that you are making an FOI request
- **Include contact details** and preferred response format
- **Use polite language** and be patient with our response time
- **Consider narrowing** broad requests if we advise the cost limit may be exceeded

DON'T:

- Use offensive or threatening language
- Make personal attacks against staff
- Submit vexatious or repeated requests without justification
- Mix FOI requests with complaints or unrelated correspondence
- Make assumptions about how we organise information
- Submit overly broad "fishing" requests

Contact Information

Parish Clerk: clerk@honeybourne-pc.gov.uk

Council Website: <https://honeybourne-pc.gov.uk/>

ICO Website: www.ico.org.uk

ICO Helpline: 0303 123 1113