

Leigh on Mendip Parish Council: Data Protection and Information Security Policy

The Data Protection Policy

The Parish Council recognises its responsibility to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998. The act regulates the use of personal data. This does not have to be sensitive data; it can be as little as a name and address.

The Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act 1998 sets out high standards for the handling of personal information and protecting individuals' rights for privacy. It also regulates how personal information can be collected, handled and used. The Data Protection Act applies to anyone holding personal information about people, electronically or on paper.

As a local authority, Leigh on Mendip Parish Council has a number of procedures in place to ensure that it complies with the Data Protection Act 1998 when holding personal information.

When dealing with personal data, the Parish Council Clerk and Councillors must ensure that:

- Data is processed fairly and lawfully. This means that personal information should only be collected from individuals if staff and Councillors have been open and honest about why they want the personal information.
- Data is processed for specified purposes only
- Data is relevant to what it is needed for. Data will be monitored so that too much or too little is not kept; only data that is needed should be held.
- Data is accurate and kept up to date. Personal data should be accurate, if it is not it should be corrected.
- Data is not kept longer than it is needed. Personal data no longer needed will be shredded; other data should be shredded but all data is to be securely disposed.
- Data is processed in accordance with the rights of individuals. Individuals must be informed, upon request, of all the personal information held about them.
- Data is kept securely. Only the Clerk and Councillors can access the data. It cannot be accessed by members of the public.

Storing and accessing data

The Parish Council recognises its responsibility to be open with people when taking personal details from them. This means that the Clerk and Councillors must be honest about why they want a particular piece of personal information. If, for example, a member of the public gives their phone number to a member of the Parish Council, this will only be used for the purpose it has been given and will not be disclosed to anyone else without the person's permission.

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The Parish Council may hold personal information about individuals such as their addresses and telephone numbers. Except for the main contact details for the Councillors the information about individuals will be securely kept and will not be available for public access. Once data is not needed any more, is out of date or has served its use and falls outside the minimum retention time of Council's document retention policy, it will be shredded or securely deleted from the computer.

The Parish Council is aware that people have the right to access any personal information that is held about them. If a person requests to see any data that is being held about them,

- They must be sent all of the personal information that is being held about them
- There must be an explanation for why it has been stored
- There must be a list of who has seen it
- It must be sent within 40 days

A fee to cover photocopying and postage charges will be charged to the person requesting the personal information. This fee will be agreed by the Parish Council and amended in line with inflation from time to time. For postage the figure will be £2.00 and for photocopying it will be £0.10 per sheet.

Disclosure of personal information

If an elected member of the council, for example a Councillor, needs to access information to help carry out their duties, this is acceptable. They are only able to access as much information as necessary and it should only be used for that specific purpose. If, for instance, someone has made a complaint about over hanging bushes in a garden, a Councillor may access an address and telephone number of the person who has made the complaint so they can help with the enquiry. However, before they access any sensitive information about a person, they would need consent to do this from the Parish Clerk. Data should never be used for political reasons unless the data subjects have consented.

Confidentiality

The Parish Council Councillors and Clerk must be aware that when complaints or queries are made, they must remain confidential unless the subject gives permission otherwise. When handling personal data, this must also remain confidential.