

Leigh on Mendip Parish Council: Freedom of Information Policy

The Freedom of Information Act came into force on 1 January 2005 and gives everyone a statutory right of access to information held by public bodies. To support this and to be open and transparent the Parish Council makes relevant information available wherever possible to individuals who may request it. However, due regard has to be taken concerning safeguarding the privacy of individuals and legitimate considerations of national security, law enforcement and commercial interests.

Model publication scheme

The Parish Council has adopted a revised model publication scheme issued by the Information Commissioner's Office.

Requests for information

A significant amount of information about the Parish Council can be accessed on the Village website.

Further information or provision in an alternative format can also be provided to individuals or organisations that make a written request for information they believe the Parish Council holds.

Any request for information under the provisions of the Act must be made to the Clerk to the Parish Council and include a name and a valid postal address, as required under the Act, as well as a clear description of the information sought.

The request should state a preference as to how the information is communicated. The Council provides records as hard copy, soft copy where available, a digest or summary of the information or access to inspect it and will try to meet the preference as far as is reasonably practical.

Responding to a request

The Parish Council will inform the requester in writing if the information is available and if so will provide it not later than 20 working days after the request is received.

The Freedom of Information Act identifies a number of categories of information that the Parish Council is not required to disclose under the Act. If this applies the requester will be informed in writing with the appropriate exemption and the basis for refusal stated within the 20 working day time period.

Charges for providing information under the Freedom of Information Act

There is no 'flat rate' fee to receive information and in many cases information can be provided free of charge. However, if the information is not readily available in the appropriate form the Parish Council may charge a fee based on the costs associated with providing the information, for example photocopying and postage (known as 'disbursements').

The Freedom of Information Act does permit the Parish Council to refuse a request if it is estimated that it will cost in excess of the appropriate cost limit (currently £450) to fulfil the request.

Freedom of information Fees Notice

If there is a need to charge a fee for disbursements or because the costs exceed the appropriate limit, the requester is to be advised in writing of the fee required within 20 working days of the request; this is known as a 'Fees Notice'. When the Fees Notice is issued the 20 working day limit for responding stops

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and only restarts when payment is received. If no fee is received within three months we there is no obligation to comply with the request.

Complaints

Complaints about the way the Parish Council has responded to a request for information should be referred to the Clerk in the first instance.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is responsible for enforcing the operation of the Act, and issues may be raised with them at any time; relevant information is on the ICO website.

Contacts

Village website: www.leigh-on-mendip.org.uk/

ICO website: ico.org.uk/

Clerk to Leigh on Mendip Parish Council:

Mrs Anthea Brooks

Address: Ashville, Monger Lane, Midsomer Norton Radstock BA3 2SP

Telephone: 01761 418737

Email: lom.pc@btinternet.com

Information Commissioner's Office

Address: Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545 745

Email: casework@ico.org.uk