

Huggate Parish Council

Freedom of Information (FOI) Policy

1. Introduction

Huggate Parish Council is committed to openness and transparency in all of its activities. This policy sets out how the Council will comply with the **Freedom of Information Act 2000** (“the Act”) and related legislation.

The Council will provide information proactively wherever possible and will respond promptly to requests for information in accordance with statutory requirements.

2. Legal Framework

This policy is based on the following legislation and guidance:

- Freedom of Information Act 2000
 - Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR)
 - Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
 - Guidance issued by the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO)
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3. Publication Scheme

Huggate Parish Council adopts the **Model Publication Scheme** approved by the Information Commissioner’s Office.

Information routinely available includes:

- Council meeting agendas and minutes
- Annual accounts and audit information
- Policies and procedures
- Contact details of councillors and the Clerk
- Budget and precept information
- Planning application responses
- Governance documents (Standing Orders, Financial Regulations)

Information will be published on the Council’s website where possible or made available on request.

4. Making a Freedom of Information Request

Requests for information must:

- Be made in writing (email, letter, or online form)

- Include the requester's name and contact details
- Clearly describe the information requested

Requests should be sent to:

The Clerk to Huggate Parish Council

Email: clerk@huggate-pc.gov.uk

5. Response Times

The Council will respond within:

- **20 working days** of receipt of the request

Where clarification is required, the time limit will be paused until sufficient information is provided.

6. Fees and Charges

Most routine requests will be provided free of charge. However, the Council may charge for:

- Photocopying, printing, or postage
- Staff time for large or complex requests (in line with FOI regulations)

If a fee is required, the requester will be informed in advance.

7. Exemptions

Some information may be withheld under exemptions in the Act. These include (but are not limited to):

- Personal data (Data Protection Act 2018)
- Legal professional privilege
- Commercially sensitive information
- Information provided in confidence
- Information that would prejudice law enforcement or public safety

Where exemptions apply, the Council will explain the reasons for refusal.

8. Refusal of Requests

A request may be refused if:

- It exceeds the cost limit (£450 for parish councils)
- The information is already reasonably accessible

- An exemption applies under the Act

Applicants will be informed in writing and given reasons for the refusal.

9. Environmental Information

Requests for environmental information will be handled under the **Environmental Information Regulations 2004**, which may allow broader access rights than FOI.

10. Review and Appeals

If a requester is dissatisfied with the Council's response, they may request an internal review by writing to the Clerk.

If still dissatisfied after the internal review, the requester may complain to:

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

Website: <https://ico.org.uk/>

11. Responsibilities

The Clerk to the Council is responsible for:

- Coordinating FOI requests
- Ensuring compliance with statutory deadlines
- Maintaining the Publication Scheme
- Advising councillors on FOI obligations

Councillors and staff must ensure that information is recorded and stored appropriately to support compliance.

12. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every **three years**, or sooner if legislation or guidance changes.