



ST STEPHEN PARISH COUNCIL

Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green and Park Street

The Parish Centre, Station Road, Bricket Wood, St Albans, Herts AL2 3PJ

Freedom of Information Policy

1. Introduction

St Stephen Parish Council is committed to being open and transparent about the work that it does and services that it provides for the local community. The Council will make as much information available as possible, to promote a greater awareness and understanding of the Council's policies, decisions and actions.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Parish Council has two main responsibilities namely to produce a Publication Scheme and to deal with individual requests for information.

An up-to-date copy of this Policy will be maintained on St Stephen Parish Council's website.

2. Scope

General requests for information will be considered as part of St Stephen Parish Council's normal day to day business. However, there are also statutory information access regimes that can be used to access specific information. This Policy concerns itself with that information which can be requested and accessed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

3. Publication Scheme

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, St Stephen Parish Council has a Publication Scheme. The current Publication Scheme commits St Stephen Parish Council to make information available to the public as part of its normal business activities.

St Stephen Parish Council will ensure that members of the public are made aware of the information that is made readily available to them through the Publication Scheme which will be made available on the Council's website and also provides details of how this information can be accessed.

Wherever possible St Stephen Parish Council will provide information through its website but where information is available in a non-electronic form or when an individual does not wish to access information electronically, an individual can contact the Clerk and ask for the information to be made available to them.

Some information may only be available to view in person at St Stephen Parish Council's premises. In these circumstances an appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

4. Requesting Information not found in the Publication Scheme

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public the right to access information held by councils and other public bodies. The Act also explains what is expected of Councils and the types of information that needs to be made available.

Anyone can make a request for information there are no restrictions on age, nationality or place of residence (they do not necessarily need to be a resident of St Stephen Parish Council).

5. Making a Freedom of Information Request

Freedom of Information Requests need to be made in writing to the Clerk who is responsible for responding to requests following consultation with the Chairman of the Council and either by letter or e-mail.

When making a Freedom of Information request, the following information must be included:-

- full name of person requesting the information
- contact details
- a detailed description of the recorded information required.

When requesting information, the enquirer does not have to mention the Freedom of Information Act nor the reasons why the information is sought.

Most Freedom of Information requests will be free of charge. However, if the amount of information requested is excessive there will be a charge for photocopies or postage. The Parish Council will notify the enquirer in advance if there are any such costs associated with the request.

St Stephen Parish Council will respond to all Freedom of Information Requests within 20 working days.

A schedule of the requests received and dealt with will be submitted to the Council every six months.

6. Exemptions

Anyone making a request to a public authority for information must be informed whether the public authority holds that information and supplied with it. Some information does not have to be revealed, such as personal information or commercially sensitive data. A full list of these exemptions on the Information Commissioner's website – www.ico.org.uk.

The Council may ask for the request to be more specific in order for the information to be provided and can turn down a Freedom of Information Request if it will cost more than £450 in order to respond to the request.

If the Parish Council refuses to provide the information requested, the enquirer can ask them to review their decision. If the enquirer is still not satisfied with the response received, they may contact the Information Commissioner's Office.

7. Policy Review

The Freedom of Information Policy will be reviewed periodically, as appropriate, to assess its effectiveness and make any appropriate changes to conform to all current legal requirements.

Note:

The Freedom of Information Policy was approved by the Full Council on 20th June 2019, Minute 1920/032.