



HELMINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

Responsibility:	Parish Clerk
Version:	1
Prepared by:	Parish Clerk
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The Freedom of Information Act 2000 came into force on 1st January 2005 enabling greater access to information that is held by public authorities.

The Freedom of Information Act gives a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities. It sets out exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities.

Any person who makes a request to a public authority for information must be informed whether the public authority holds that information, and subject to exemptions, must be supplied with that information.

For a full list of exemptions and further information relating to the Act see the Information Commissioner's website at www.ico.org.uk

Individuals already have the right of access to information about themselves under the Data Protection Act 1998. As far as public authorities are concerned, the Freedom of Information Act will extend this right to allow public access to all types of information held.

Every public authority is required to adopt and maintain a publication scheme, setting out the classes of information it holds, the manner in which it intends to publish the information and whether a charge will be made for the information.

The purpose of a scheme is to ensure a significant amount of information is available, without the need for a specific request. Most routinely published information provided by the Council is available from this website. If after using the search facilities, you are still unable to access the information you require please submit a Freedom of Information request to the contact details below. Your request must be made in writing. This can be in any written format, such as a letter or email. The request must state your name and address for correspondence and describe the information required.

Freedom of Information requests will generally be dealt with within 20 working days of being received, although this timescale can be extended in certain circumstances. You may request that the information be supplied in any form, however the Council will take into account the cost of supplying the information in this form before complying with your request. In particular you may ask for a copy of the information sought, or for permission to inspect the records containing the information. The Council will provide the information in the form requested unless it is unreasonable to do so.

The Council will charge the full cost of for disbursements, such as copying or printing. A fees notice will be sent to you that will put a hold on the 20 days for responding to your initial request until the fee is paid. If after three months the fee is unpaid, it will be assumed you no longer require the information.

Contact Details:

Mrs Sarah Clare – Helmingham Parish Clerk, The Cottage, Cow Green, Bacton, IP14 4HJ

07801 628591

clerk@helminghamparishcouncil.gov.uk

<https://helminghamparishcouncil.gov.uk>

Helmingham Parish Council – Freedom of Information Publication Policy

Class 1 – Who we are and what we do

Organisation information and representatives on Village Organisations are readily available upon request to the Parish Clerk, or on the website.

Class 2 – What we spend and how we spend it

All the functions and financial transactions of the Parish Council are subject to Government Audit under the auspices of the Audit Commission. The current external and internal auditors may be contacted via the Parish Clerk. On publication of the notice of audit, a parishioner may, on application to the Clerk in accordance with said notice, view:

- i. Annual Return Form (Limited to last available)
- ii. Annual Statutory Report by Auditor (Limited to last available)
- iii. Receipt/Payments records and bank statements (Limited to last financial year)
- iv. Precept Decisions (Limited to last financial year)
- v. VAT records (Limited to last financial year)
- vi. Standing Orders
- vii. Assets Register
- viii. Risk Assessment Information

(Much of this information is freely published on the village website.)

Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing

An Annual Report is produced every year. This is presented at the Annual Meeting of the Parish and published on the village website shortly thereafter.

Class 4 – How we make decisions

Agendas and supporting papers for Council meetings for any forthcoming meeting is available for inspection by application to the Parish Clerk. Meetings are normally held in St Mary's Church, Helmingham. Parish Council Meeting dates are published on the homepage of the website <https://helminghamparishcouncil.gov.uk>, with the public invited to attend and to address the Parish Council as per the public session time included on the agendas. The Annual General Meeting of the Council usually takes place in May. Draft minutes are uploaded to the village website shortly after each meeting, with approved minutes of previous meetings also available on the website. Earlier minutes than those readily available on the website can be obtained by application to the Clerk.

All responses to planning applications are contained within the minutes published by the Parish Council. The decisions are also available via the District Council's website.

Class 5 – Our policies and procedures

Helmingham Parish Council has adopted the revised 2020 Code of Conduct for Parish & Town Councils which may be viewed by on the village website. The Member's Declarations of Acceptance of Office, the Register of Interests or the Register of Members Interest Book, may be viewed by arrangement with the Parish Clerk, or the Monitoring Officer at Mid Suffolk District Council.

The Council has adopted and follows various policies, including Standing Orders & Financial Regulations – all of which may be viewed via the website, or by arrangement with the Parish Clerk.

Class 6 – Lists & Registers

The Council retains all publicly available registers and lists which are available for inspection.

Class 7 – The services we offer

Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters produced for the public and businesses are readily available from the Parish Clerk, on the Parish Notice Board, or via the website.