

Freedom of Information policy

This is a statement of the Freedom of Information policy which has been adopted by Pickering Town Council.

The council's Freedom of Information policy sets out the arrangements under which information will be provided to applicants who request information in writing from Pickering Town Council under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

The council's Publication Scheme is available to view either as a hard copy which is available from the town council office, or available on the council's website www.pickering.gov.uk.

The publication scheme commits the council:

- to proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine information, including environmental information, which is held by the council or parish meeting and falls within the classes set out below
- to specify the information which is held by the council or parish meeting and falls within the classes below
- to proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine information in line with the statements contained within the scheme
- to produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public
- to review and update on a regular basis the information the council or parish meeting makes available under this scheme
- to produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available
- to make the Publication Scheme available to the public.

Classes of information:

- who we are or what we do;
- what we spend and how we spend it;
- what our priorities are and how we are doing;
- how we make decisions;
- our policies and procedures;
- lists and registers;
- the services we offer.

The classes of information will not generally include:

- information the disclosure of which is prevented by law, or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act;
- information in draft form;
- information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files which have been placed in archive storage or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

Charges which may be made for information published under the scheme – the publication scheme also contains standard paragraphs stating whether any information contained within the classes is subject to a charge.

Information falling outside the scope of the publication scheme – this will continue to be dealt with separately under the charging regime set out in the relevant regulations.

Procedure for applicants requesting information listed under Pickering Town Council's Publication Scheme.

1. Applications requesting information in the first instance should be in written form and signed by the applicant and sent to the clerk to the council. Requests should include the applicant's name and address for a response. The requests can be forwarded to the clerk in electronic form.
2. Requests should include a clear statement of the information required (if the request is unclear the council may ask the applicant to be more specific which may cause delay in the council making a response).
3. A written signed request for information will be marked with the date of receipt and forwarded to the town clerk.
4. Where the information is reasonably accessible to the applicant via information within the council's Publication Scheme, the applicant will be directed to the Scheme.
5. The clerk will advise the applicant within five working days whether the application is sufficiently clear to enable the provision of a full response or whether additional information is required.
6. The council will aim to respond to a request for information from an applicant under the above act and regulations within 20 working days.
7. An application for personal information will not be dealt with under this procedure but will be responded to in accordance with the terms of data protection legislation. Personal information does not include information about a deceased person.
8. The council is not obliged to comply with repeated or vexatious requests.
9. If payment is required under the scale of charges the 20 day period restarts on receipt of the payment.
10. Certain information held by the council will be classified as exempt under the Freedom of Information Act. The act provides for both absolute and qualified exemptions and where information is absolutely exempt there is no obligation under the act to provide the requested information.
11. The council will review its Publication Scheme on a regular basis.