

Hurstbourne Tarrant Parish Council
Access to Information Policy

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Hurstbourne Tarrant Parish Council

Access to Information Policy

Policy statement on Access to information

1. Introduction

Hurstbourne Tarrant Parish Council supports the statutory framework for responding to requests for information under access to information legislation including the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, and the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A. Under this legislation there is a requirement to ensure that a level of openness is maintained and enhanced to promote transparent, open and accountable Local Government.

2. Aims

The aims of the policy are to assist councillors and staff to meet the presumption in favour of disclosure of information required by the legislation, and thereby to promote greater openness, provide increased transparency of decision making and to build public trust and confidence.

These aims will be balanced against the need to ensure the confidentiality of some information relating to such areas as personal privacy, commercial sensitivity, security issues, and where disclosure would not be in the public interest.

This policy was adopted by the parish council in December 2008.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all requests for information made to Hurstbourne Tarrant Parish Council whether written or verbal. It aims to ensure that requests are managed in accordance with professional principles, and within the timescales required by specified legislation and codes of practice. This Policy shall apply to all employees of Hurstbourne Tarrant Parish Council, including elected members, contract, agency and other temporary staff, volunteers and employees of partner organisations working for of Hurstbourne Tarrant Parish Council, and it is the responsibility of councillors and the clerk to ensure that these groups are made aware of them and any subsequent guidance that is issued.

4. Policy Statement

Hurstbourne Tarrant Parish Council is committed to a framework for access to information which ensures that:

- 4.1 All requests for information shall be dealt with promptly, and within the statutory timescales
- 4.2 Advice and assistance shall be offered to help any enquirer frame their request
- 4.3 Requests will be assessed to ensure that: the confidentiality of personal or commercially sensitive data is not breached; disclosure is in the public interest and provision of the information would not be prejudicial to provision of essential Parish Council Services
- 4.4 Information shall only be withheld if a legitimate exemption applies and that in such a case the application of the exemption will be explained to the enquirer
- 4.5 Any enquirer shall be kept informed of the progress of their request and of any delays to which it may be subject
- 4.6 Assistance shall be offered to any enquirer to help them understand the information they receive

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- 4.7 All enquirers shall be advised of their rights to question the information received and request a review of what has not been provided
- 4.8 All enquirers shall be advised of their right to take any complaint to an internal review process (where appropriate) or to the Information Commissioner, if they are dissatisfied with the service received or the information provided
- 4.9 The majority of information which can be made publicly available shall be published to the Hurstbourne Tarrant Parish Council website
- 4.10 All requests shall be monitored to demonstrate compliance with the legislation
- 4.11 All staff shall be provided with training, guidance and procedures to enable them to manage requests for information
- 4.12 A member or members of staff shall be appointed with specific responsibility for the management and monitoring of all requests for information made under the legislation
- 4.13 The management of the access to information process shall be regularly audited to ensure compliance with statutory requirements, and that relevant national codes of practice are followed

5. Monitor and Review

This policy shall be the responsibility of the Parish Council and shall be reviewed biennially in line with the relevant legislation. In particular this will confirm that:

- 5.1 The scope and content of the policy is still appropriate in the light of legal requirements and the parish council's practical experience
- 5.2 Training and awareness is being provided in accordance with the policy
- 5.3 All staff and Councillors are aware of their responsibilities and requests for information are being answered within the statutory timescales applicable under the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.
- 5.4 Should it be discovered that this Policy has not been complied with, or if an intentional breach of these standards has taken place, the Chairman, in consultation with parish council, shall have full authority to take such immediate steps as considered necessary, including disciplinary action.

Signed:.....

Chairman of the Parish Council

Dated:

Signed:.....

Parish Clerk

Dated:

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Footnote

This policy and related standards will be communicated to individuals or organisations handling information, acting as an agent, or providing a service on behalf of the Parish Council to ensure they are aware of their legal obligations and responsibilities.

For enquiries relating to this policy, contact:

David Baker - Clerk to the parish council

Tel 01264 736436

Email: theparishclerk@hbt.org.uk