

Stockton Heath Parish Council

Freedom of Information Policy

This policy is supplemental to, and does not in any way override, the Parish Council standing orders and/or Financial Regulations.

This policy was adopted by the full parish council at its meeting on 14 May 2019.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Stockton Heath 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.
- 1.2 Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Stockton Heath Parish Council has two main responsibilities – to produce a Publication Scheme and to deal with individual requests for information.
- 1.3 An up-to-date copy of this Policy shall be maintained on Stockton Heath Parish Council's website.

2. Scope

General requests for information will be considered as part of Stockton Heath 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 accessed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

3. The Publication Scheme

- 3.1 In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Stockton Heath Parish Council has a Publication Scheme. The Publication Scheme commits Stockton Heath Parish Council to make information available to the public as part of its normal business activities.
- 3.2 Wherever possible Stockton Heath Parish Council will provide information through its website. 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 Parish Clerk and ask for the information to be made available to them.
- 3.3 Some information may only be available to view in person at Stockton Heath Parish Council's premises. In these circumstances an appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.
- 3.4 Stockton Heath Parish Council will ensure that members of the public are aware of the information that is made readily available to them and provide details of how this information can be accessed and any charges which may be applicable. This information is available through Stockton Heath Parish Council's Publication Scheme which is available on the Council's website.

4. Requesting Information not found in the Publication Scheme

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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 Stockton Heath Parish).

5. Making a Freedom of Information Request

- 5.1 Freedom of Information Requests need to be made in writing to the Clerk who is responsible for responding to requests – either by letter or e-mail.
- 5.2 When making a Freedom of Information request, the following information must be included: Name; Contact details; A detailed description of the recorded information required.
- 5.3 When requesting information, the enquirer does not have to mention the Freedom of Information Act, nor the reasons why the information is sought.
- 5.4 Most Freedom of Information requests will be free of charge. However there may be a small charge for photocopies or postage. Stockton Heath Parish Council will notify the enquirer in advance if there are any charges associated with the request.
- 5.5 Stockton Heath Parish Council will respond to all Freedom of Information Requests within 20 working days.

6. Exemptions

- 6.1 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. You can view a full list of these exemptions on the Information Commissioner's website www.ico.org.uk.
- 6.2 Stockton Heath Parish Council can turn down a Freedom of Information Request if it costs more than £450 to respond to.
- 6.3 Stockton Heath Parish Council may ask for the request to be more specific in order for the information to be provided.
- 6.4 If Stockton Heath 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 are advised to contact the Information Commissioner's Office.