



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

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Previous versions	

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Introduction

Blyth Town Council abides by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) places legislative requirements on all public authorities, including local councils, to provide public access to information held by public authorities. It does this in two ways:

- Public authorities are obliged to publish certain information about their activities through a publication scheme.
- Members of the public are entitled to request information from public authorities to which the council is obliged to respond.

Please note:

- The Act does not give people access to their own personal data (information about themselves). Individuals wishing to see information about themselves need to make a Subject Access Request under the Data Protection Act 2018. See Blyth Town Council's Subject Access Request policy for more information or visit the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website.
- The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) provides the public the right to request environmental information from public authorities. For more information on EIRs, visit the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) website.

It is the policy of Blyth Town Council to reduce the need for individual freedom of information requests by proactively making information publicly available on a routine basis. A guide to what information is publicly available can be found in the model Publication Scheme and Standing Orders. Information is mainly published on our website, with other channels (such as noticeboards and social media) also used.

Freedom of Information Request Procedure

Making a Request

Requests for information must be in writing, must give the applicant's name and return address and must describe the information requested in such a way that we are able to locate it. A written request includes an e-mail.

FOI requests do not need to be written in a special form, mention the FOI Act or refer to Freedom of Information.

Address Freedom of Information requests to info@blythtowncouncil.gov.uk.

Responding to a Request

All requests for information will be logged on a record sheet. All correspondence, phone calls, e-mails etc., that follow the original request may be recorded.

The Council has 20 working days in which to deal with a request for information. If it is not clear what information is required, the 20-day period does not begin until clarification is received from the applicant as to exactly what is required. If further information is required in order to locate the information requested, this will be undertaken as quickly as possible.

If there is likely to be a delay, we will tell you – for example if legal advice on a complex request must be sought. We will explain why the delay is necessary and will always try to provide information as soon as possible.

All responses – whether fulfilled or refused – will include guidance on the procedure for internal review and complaints to the Information Commissioner's Office.

Exemptions and Refusals

The FOI Act outlines some exemptions to requests. Exemptions include information already reasonably accessible, information intended for future publication, research information and if complying with the request would cause prejudice. A full list of exemptions can be found in [Part II of the FOI Act](#).

The Act also outlines reasons for refusal of requests, such as:

- The information is not held by the Council.
- Responding would cost more than the set limit of £450.
- The request repeats previous requests from the same person.
- The request is vexatious, or in other words, it has the potential to cause a disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption, irritation or distress.

However, Blyth Town Council aims to guide people successfully through a request and will assist with the above by:

- Providing reasonable advice and assistance to applicants for information, including pointing applicants to possible sources of the information.
- Advising the requestor to clarify or narrow down their request so complying does not exceed the financial limit.
- Regarding repeat requests, considering whether a reasonable interval has elapsed since the previous request, whether the request is identical or substantially similar to the previous request, whether any relevant, new

information has been generated since the previous request and a reasonable interval

If Blyth Town Council do not hold the request information, refuse a request or the information requested falls wholly or partly under an exemption, we will send a refusal notice explaining the basis of the refusal.

Review

If you are dissatisfied with the response to your FOI request, you may request an internal review of the decision. The internal review is the Council's formal process for handling complaints about FOI responses. This involves reconsideration of the original request and all information, not merely a review of the decision, and conducted by an officer not involved in the original response where possible.

Reviews must be requested in writing (including email) within 40 working days of the Council's FOI response.

Reviews will be completed within 20 working days of receipt of the review request. Any extensions of this timeframe will be communicated and explained.

If you are still dissatisfied after our internal review, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). You should make complaints to the ICO within six weeks of receiving the outcome of an internal review. The easiest way to lodge a complaint is through their website: www.ico.org.uk/foicomplaints.

Other relevant policies and documents

- Publications Scheme
- Subject Access Requests
- Data Protection Policy



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION PUBLICATIONS SCHEME

Blyth Town Council abides by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

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- Public authorities are obliged to publish certain information about their activities through a publication scheme.
- Members of the public are entitled to request information from public authorities to which the council is obliged to respond. See the Freedom of Information Policy and the Information Commissioner's Office website for more information on Freedom of Information requests.

Blyth Town Council makes all information that is required to make publicly available on its website. We adopt the Information Commissioner's Office Model Publication Scheme.

Copies of information

Where it is impracticable to make information available on a website or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the website, it is indicated below how information can be obtained.

If you would like to obtain copies of information detailed in the Model Publication below, please contact the Clerk with your request in writing. A small charge may be made for any copies.

Arms Everyne House, Quay Road, Blyth, NE24 2AS

info@blythtowncouncil.gov.uk

Any charges for providing information are detailed below.

Information available from Blyth Town Council under the model publication scheme: -

Information to be published	How the information can be obtained	Cost
Class1 – Who we are and what we do:		
Who's who on the Council and its Committees	Hard copy (H) / website (W) / electronic file (E)	
Contact details for Town Clerk and Council members (named contacts where possible with telephone number and email address (if used))	H / W / E	
Location of main Council office and accessibility details	H / W / E	
Staffing structure	H / W / E	
Class 2 – What we spend and how we spend it:		
Annual return form and report by auditor	H / W / E	
Finalised budget	H / W / E	
Precept	H / W / E	
Borrowing Approval letter	H / W / E	
Financial Standing Orders and Regulations	H / W / E	
Grants given and received	H / W / E	
List of current contracts awarded and value of contract	H / W / E	
Members' allowances and expenses	H / W / E	
Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing:		
Parish Plan (current and previous year as a minimum)	H / W / E	
Annual Report to Parish or Community Meeting	H / W / E	
Quality status	n/a	
Local charters drawn up in accordance with DCLG guidelines	n/a	
Class 4 – How we make decisions:		
Timetable of meetings (Council, any committee/sub-committee meetings and parish meetings)	H / W / E	
Agendas of meetings (as above)	H / W / E	

Minutes of meetings (as above) – nb this will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meeting.	H / W / E	
Reports presented to council meetings – nb this will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meeting.	H / W / E	
Responses to consultation papers	H / W / E	
Responses to planning applications	H / W / E	
Bye-laws, if any	H / W / E	
Class 5 – Our policies and procedures:		
Policies and procedures for the conduct of council business, including :-	H / W / E	
Procedural standing orders		
Committee and sub-committee terms of reference		
Delegated authority in respect of officers		
Code of Conduct		
Policy statements		
Policies and procedures for the provision of services and about the employment of staff, including: -	H / W / E	
Internal policies relating to the delivery of services		
Equality and diversity policy		
Health and safety policy		
Recruitment policies (including current vacancies)		
Policies and procedures for handling requests for information		
Complaints procedures (including those covering requests for information and operating the publication scheme)		
Information security policy	H / W / E	

Records management policies (records retention, destruction and archive)	H / W / E	
Data protection policies	H / W / E	
Schedule of charges (for the publication of information)	H / W / E	
Class 6 – Lists and Registers:		
Currently maintained lists and registers only		
Any publicly available register or list (if any are held this should be publicised; in most circumstances existing access provisions will suffice)	H / W / E	
Assets Register	H / W / E	
Disclosure log (indicating the information that has been provided in response to requests; recommended as good practice, but may not be held by parish councils)	H / W / E	
Register of members' interests	H / W / E	
Register of gifts and hospitality	H / W / E	
Class 7 – The services we offer:		
Allotments	H / W / E In-person on site	
Burial grounds and closed churchyards	n/a	
Community centres and village halls	n/a	
Parks, playing fields and recreational facilities	n/a	
Seating, litter bins, clocks, memorials and lighting	H / W / E In-person on site	
Bus shelters	H / W / E In-person on site	
Markets	n/a	
Public conveniences	n/a	
Agency agreements	n/a	
A summary of services for which the council is entitled to recover a fee, together with those fees (e.g. burial fees)	n/a	
Additional Information - This will provide Councils with the opportunity to publish information that is not itemised in the lists above		

Schedule of Charges

The purpose of the publications scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public.

This describes how the charges have been arrived at. The ICO's model publications scheme states that charges made by the authority for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.

Material which is published and accessed on a website will be provided free of charge.

TYPE OF CHARGE	DESCRIPTION	BASIS OF CHARGE
Disbursement cost	Photocopying @ 10p per sheet (black & white)	Actual cost
	Photocopying @ 20p per sheet (colour)	Actual cost
	Postage	Actual cost of Royal Mail standard 2 nd class
Statutory Fee		
		In accordance with the relevant legislation
Other		

If a charge is to be made, confirmation of the payment due will be given before the information is provided. Payment may be requested prior to provision of the information.