



WINCANTON TOWN COUNCIL

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

The Freedom of Information Act requires every public authority to adopt and maintain a publication of information scheme which has been approved by the Information Commissioner, and to publish information in accordance with the scheme. Wincanton Town Council information available under the Model Publication Scheme is available from the Town Hall office and a copy is available on Wincanton Town Council website.

The Freedom of Information Act covers any recorded information that is held by a public authority. Recorded information includes printed documents, computer files, letters, emails, photographs, sound and video recordings. Under the Freedom of Information Act there are a number of exemptions that can prevent the information becoming public, such as confidential information which fall under the General Data Protection Regulations. However, for those exemptions, a request may only be refused if the public interest in withholding the information outweighs that in disclosing it. Wincanton Town Council Data Protection Policy is available from the Town Hall office and a copy is available on Wincanton Town Council website.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The Town Clerk is responsible for responding to requests. If you have any queries regarding the Freedom of Information Act, contact the Town Clerk:

Town Hall
Market Place
Wincanton
Somerset
BA9 9LD
Telephone: 01963 31693
Email: townclerk@wincantontowncouncil.gov.uk
Website: www.wincantontowncouncil.gov.uk

Requests under Freedom of Information must be made in writing and include the enquirer's name and an address for correspondence (a contact telephone number may be helpful, but not essential). When requesting information, the enquirer does not have to mention the Freedom of Information Act, nor the reason why the information is being sought. Anyone can make a request for information including members of the public, journalists, lawyers, businesses, charities and other organisations, and they do not need to reside in the parish of Wincanton.

Wincanton Town Council has a duty to respond to all requests by informing the enquirer whether or not it holds the requested information and then supplying the information (except where an

exemption applies). Wincanton Town Council is statutory obliged to respond to requests within 20 working days from the day that the request was received.

Charges can be made in respect of disbursement costs (copying, printing, postage etc) to reflect the costs incurred in meeting a request. Written agreement from the enquirer that they will pay disbursement costs should be received before any copying, printing etc is done. Charges will not be made for staff time in sourcing information if the estimated cost is less than £450.00 or 18 hours. Requests can be denied if the staffing cost necessary to retrieve/supply the information is greater than £450.00 or 18 hours (as per exemption section 12 – cost). Alternatively, a fee notice can be issued setting out the intended amount to be charged for the supply of the requested information. Written agreement from the enquirer that they will pay the extra costs must be received before any copying, printing etc is done.

Requests can be denied (wholly or in part) if an exemption applies. The Freedom of Information Act contains 32 exemptions but not all of them are applicable to Wincanton Town Council. The exemptions that are most likely to apply to Wincanton Town Council are listed below (the list is not exhaustive):

- If the request exceeds the cost limit (as already mentioned)
- If the request for information is accessible by other means
- If the requested information is intended for future publication
- If the requested information would prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs

Requests for personal information in respect of the enquirer him/herself cannot be dealt with by the Freedom of Information Act; such requests should be submitted in accordance with the Data Protection Act. If a request is too vague and/or insufficiently clear, the enquirer will be contacted for clarification. However, the 20 days response timescale would commence the day a sufficiently clear request has been received. If Wincanton Town Council does not hold all the requested information, it will supply the information it does hold and provide guidance as to whom to contact to obtain the remainder of the information. If the response is not satisfactory, the enquirer can request a review by contacting the Chair of Wincanton Town Council, please mark correspondence as Private and Confidential.

The Chair of Wincanton Town Council can be contacted at his/her email address and telephone number – the details are displayed on Wincanton Town Council noticeboard and on Wincanton Town Council website: www.wincantontowncouncil.gov.uk

If a review is requested it will be completed within 20 working days, or within 40 working days in exceptional cases

If the review is not satisfactory, the enquirer can contact the Information Commissioners Office:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Telephone: 0303 123 1113
Email: casework@ico.org.uk
Website: www.ico.org.uk