

# Alvescot Parish Council

## Freedom of Information Act

### Publication Scheme

Adopted April 2013

# Introduction

## **The Freedom of Information Act**

The Freedom of Information Act grants to members of the public rights of access to all kinds of recorded information held by a wide range of public authorities. Information about the Act is available from the Information Commissioners' Office at [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk).

## **Publication Scheme**

The Act requires every public authority to adopt and maintain a generic model publication scheme which should be adopted and operated by all public authorities from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009. Alvescot Parish Council adopted the generic model publication scheme at its Council Meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2013. The publication scheme provides a list of all the information the Council will make routinely available, explain how it can be accessed (via the Village website or in hard copy) and whether or not a charge will be made for it.

## **How do I make a request?**

- Requests should be made in writing either by letter or e mail addressed to the Parish Clerk.
- Make the information as specific as possible. If your request is too broad the Parish Council may ask you to clarify it. This could mean a delay in obtaining information.
- Provide as full a description as possible of the information you require.
- Be clear about the format you would prefer to receive the information in, e.g. by e- mail or paper copy.

## **What happens once my request is received?**

Any request for information will be treated as a formal request for information and the Parish Council suggests that e-mails or letters are clearly marked as "Freedom of Information" to avoid confusion.

The Parish Council must respond promptly to requests or, in any event, within 28 working days although the Parish Council has longer to consider whether the disclosure of normally exempt information would be in the public interest. When considering the public interest, the Parish Council must do so "within reasonable time".

## **What if the information is refused?**

The Parish Council is committed to openness and accountability and already makes information available to the public through the website and information folders. Where the Parish Council decides not to disclose the information requested it must give reasons for its decision and explain how the exemption or exception applies. The Parish Council must also inform you of your right to complain to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO).

## **How can the ICO help?**

You may apply to the ICO for a decision about whether the request had been dealt with according to the Act, for example, you believe there has been an excessive delay or if you wish to dispute the application of an exemption or refusals made on public interest grounds. The ICO may serve a decision notice on the public authority either confirming the decision made by the public authority or directing it to disclose information within a certain time. If you or the Parish Council disagrees with the ICO's decision you have 28 days to appeal to the independent Information Tribunal. The Information Tribunal may uphold the ICO's decision notice, amend it (i.e. change the time frame for release of information) or overturn it.

Additional guidance on the Freedom of Information Act is available on the ICO website at [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk) or by telephone to their helpline 01625 545745.