

Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council

Freedom of Information Act – Publication Scheme

Introduction

The Freedom of Information Act 2000, which came into full effect on 1 January 2005, gives a general right of access to all kinds of recorded information held by public authorities. Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council is a public authority as defined in the Act.

Every public authority is required to adopt and maintain a model publication scheme with effect from 1 January 2009. Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council adopted the generic model publication scheme (detailed below) at its meeting on

Members of the public already have a high degree of access to information from Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council via meetings, the telephone, email, and its website or by personal visits to town councillors.

Freedom of Information Requests and the Publication Scheme

It is important to note that a publication scheme simply sets out the information that is routinely available. Information that is not listed in the guide to information can still be requested and should be made available unless it can be legitimately withheld due to an exemption. All applications must be made in writing to: The Clerk, Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council, Incott Farm, Sampford Courtenay, Okehampton EX20 2SR. All information not covered by an exemption must ordinarily be released to the applicant within 20 working days of the request. If the town council considers that the information requested should not be made available because of an exemption applying then the applicant will be informed of this.

Model Publication Scheme

This model publication scheme has been prepared and approved by the Information Commissioner. It may be adopted without modification by any public authority without further approval and will be valid until further notice.

This publication scheme commits an authority to make information available to the public as part of its normal business activities. The information covered is included in the classes of information mentioned below, where this information is held by the authority. Additional assistance is provided to the definition of these classes in sector specific guidance manuals issued by the Information Commissioner.

The scheme commits an authority:

- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information, including environmental information, which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.
- To specify the information which is held by the authority and falls within the classifications below.
- To proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine, information in line with the statements contained within this scheme.
- To produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public.
- To review and update on a regular basis the information the authority makes available under this scheme.
- To produce a schedule of any fees charged for access to information which is made proactively available.
- To make this publication scheme available to the public.

Classes of information

Who we are and what we do.

Organisational information, locations and contacts, constitutional and legal governance.

What we spend and how we spend it.

Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, tendering, procurement and contracts.

What our priorities are and how we are doing.

Strategy and performance information, plans, assessments, inspections and reviews.

How we make decisions.

Policy proposals and decisions. Decision making processes, internal criteria and procedures, consultations.

Our policies and procedures.

Current written protocols for delivering our functions and responsibilities.

Lists and registers.

Information held in registers required by law and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the authority.

The services we offer.

Advice and guidance, booklets and leaflets, transactions and media releases. A description of the services offered.

The classes of information will not generally include:

- Information the disclosure of which is prevented by law, or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act, or is otherwise properly considered to be protected from disclosure.
- Information in draft form.
- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage, or is difficult to access for similar reasons.

The method by which information published under this scheme will be made available

The authority will indicate clearly to the public what information is covered by this scheme and how it can be obtained.

Where it is within the capability of a public authority, information will be provided on a website. 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, a public authority will indicate how information can be obtained by other means and provide it by those means.

In exceptional circumstances some information may be available only by viewing in person. Where this manner is specified, contact details will be provided. An appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

Information will be provided in the language in which it is held or in such other language that is legally required. Where an authority is legally required to translate any information, it will do so.

Obligations under disability and discrimination legislation and any other legislation to provide information in other forms and formats will be adhered to when providing information in accordance with this scheme.

Charges which may be made for information published under this scheme

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

Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by Parliament.

Charges may be made for actual disbursements incurred such as:

- photocopying
- postage and packaging
- the costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information

Charges may also be made for information provided under this scheme where they are legally authorised, they are in all the circumstances, including the general principles of the right of access to information held by public authorities, justified and are in accordance with a published schedule or schedules of fees which is readily available to the public.

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.

Written requests

Information held by a public authority that is not published under this scheme can be requested in writing, when its provision will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

Information available from Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council under the Model Publication Scheme:

Information to be published	How the information can be obtained	Cost
Class 1 - Who we are and what we do <i>Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts This will be current information only</i>	Website or hard copy	5p per sheet/free
Who's who on the Council and its Committees	Website, or hard copy	As above
Contact details for Parish Clerk and Council members (named contacts where possible with telephone number and email address (if used))	Website or hard copy	As above
Location of main Council office and accessibility details	Website or hard copy	As above
Staffing structure	Website or hard copy	As above
Class 2 – What we spend and how we spend it <i>Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit Current and previous financial year as a minimum</i>	Website or hard copy	5p per sheet/free
Annual return form and report by auditor	Hard copy and website	As above
Finalised budget	Hard copy	As above
Precept	Website Hard copy	Free As above
Borrowing Approval letter (if applicable)	Hard copy	As above
Financial Standing Orders and Regulations	Hard copy and website	As above
Grants given and received	Website or hard copy	As above
List of current contracts awarded and value of contract	Hard copy	As above
Members' allowances and expenses	Hard copy	As above
Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews	Website or hard copy	5p per sheet
Parish Plan (if applicable)	Hard copy	

			5p per double sheet
Local charters (if applicable) drawn up in accordance with DCLG guidelines	Hard copy		As above
Class 4 – How we make decisions	Website or hard copy		
<i>Decision making processes and records of decisions</i>			
<i>Current and previous council year as a minimum</i>			
Timetable of meetings (Council, any committee/sub-committee meetings and annual parish meeting)	Website, or hard copy	Free 5p per sheet	
Agendas of meetings (as above)	Website or hard copy	As above	
Minutes of meetings (as above) – note this will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meeting.	Website or hard copy	As above	
Reports presented to council meetings - note this will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meeting.	Hard copy	As above	
Responses to consultation papers	Hard copy	As above	
Responses to planning applications	Website or hard copy	As above	
Bye-laws (if applicable)	Hard copy	As above	
Class 5 – Our policies and procedures	Website or hard copy		
<i>Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities</i>			
<i>Current information only</i>			
Policies and procedures for the conduct of council business:			
Procedural standing orders	Hard copy and website	As above	
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:		
As available – see website, full list and additional documents available on request	Hard copy and website	As above
Class 6 – Lists and Registers		
<i>Currently maintained lists and registers only</i>		
Any publicly available register or list		
Assets Register	Hard copy/website	4p per single sheet 5p per double sheet
Disclosure log (indicating the information that has been provided in response to requests)	Hard copy	As above
Register of members' interests	Hard copy/website	As above
Register of gifts and hospitality	Hard copy	As above
Class 7 – The services we offer		
<i>Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters produced for the public and businesses</i>		
Current information only	Website or hard copy; some information may only be available by inspection	As above
Old Town Park	Website or hard copy	As above
Meldon Woods	Website or hard copy	As above
Seating, litter bins, dog bins	Website or hard copy	As above
Bus shelters	Website or hard copy	As above
Noticeboards	Website or hard copy	As above

Contact details:

Website address: www.okehamptonhamlets-pc.gov.uk

Jane Gillard
Parish Clerk
Incott Farm
Sampford Courtenay
Okehampton EX20 2SR

Telephone: 01837 55728
Email: mail@okehamptonhamlets-pc.gov.uk

- c) **Payments**
Authorisation: All expenditure must be authorised by the Council (or by a Committee having delegated authority), or by the Clerk by way of delegated authority.
- b) **Clerk to the Council / Responsible Finance Officer**
Draft of approval 4th November 2008. Date of commencement of Employment 10th November 2008.

The Council has appointed a Clerk to the Council who acts as the Council's adviser and administrator. The Clerk is responsible for the management and administration of the Council's finances. The Clerk is also responsible for advising on the day to day compliance with laws and regulations that the Council is subject to and for managing responsibilities for the management and administration of the Council's finances. The Clerk is responsible for advising the Council on the day to day compliance with laws and regulations that the Council is subject to and for managing tasks. The Clerk also provides advice to help the Council ensure that its procedures, control systems and policies are adhered to.

No expenditure may be incurred unless by way of authorised delegated authority of the Clerk or by agreement of full Council. No expenditure may be incurred unless by way of budget line to budget line, can be approved by full Council if deemed necessary and appropriate. The Council carries out regular reviews of its internal controls, systems and procedures.

The Council monitors progress against financial objectives, financial systems and procedures, budgetary control and carries out regular reviews of financial matters. The full Council meets on a monthly basis (first Tuesday save for August when a meeting will not be held unless agreed by full Council) and it receives the Minutes of the previous meeting(s). The Council also monitors progress by reviewing relevant reports from County and District Councillors.

a) **The Council**
The Council has elected a Chairman who is responsible for the smooth running of meetings.

3. THE COUNCIL'S INTERNAL CONTROLS

The system of internal control has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31st March 2021 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and accounts with proper practice as set out in the Practitioners' Guide to Governance and Accountability in Local Councils (2020/21 edition).

c) manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

a) identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives
b) evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact they should be realised
c) manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to:

1. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY
Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council is a local authority funded largely by public money, and is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2021

OKEHAMPTON HAMLETS PARISH COUNCIL - STATEMENT ON INTERNAL CONTROL



Chairman

Date of approval of this Statement of Internal Control; adopted minute reference

- (d) Contracts
Procedures as to contracts are laid down in the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The Council oversees all contracts.
- (e) Internal Audit
The Council has appointed Alison Marshall as its independent Internal Auditor until further notice who will report to the Council on the adequacy of its records, procedures, systems, internal controls and risk management. The effectiveness of the internal audit is reviewed annually.
- (f) External Audit
The Council has been appointed External Auditor P K F Littlejohn until further notice. Following completion of the External Audit the annual Certificate of Audit is provided, which is presented to the Council.
- (g) Review of Effectiveness
Okhampton Parish Council has responsibility for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of its system of internal controls. The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal controls is monitored and informed by:
- the work of Officers within the Council responsible Finance Officer
- the work of the Parish Clerk (the Responsible Finance Officer)
- the work of the Independent Internal Auditor
- the Annual Return and their annual letter
- the number of significant issues that are raised during the year.

4. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

- The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panels) Regulations 2020 allow local councils to hold remote meetings. The regulations give automatic authority to hold remote meetings and amend standing orders as required.
- These regulations remain in force until May 7th, 2021 or earlier if repealed, and require a number of temporary changes to Standing Orders.
- General**
- The Local Authority Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 allow local councils to hold remote meetings. The regulations give automatic authority to hold remote meetings and amend standing orders as required.
- These regulations remain in force until May 7th, 2021 or earlier if repealed, and require a number of temporary changes to Standing Orders.
- 1) Annual Meeting**
- a) The requirement to hold an Annual Meeting of the Council is to be disregarded and prior to May 7th, 2021 may only take place where called by the Chair or following a resolution calling for an annual meeting being passed at an ordinary or extra ordinary meeting of the Council.
- b) Where a document is required to be published and made available at the council's offices, this shall include published on the website of the council.
- c) Where there is a requirement to publish information including public notices, agendas, minutes, background papers and written reports, this shall include published on the website of the council.
- 2) Access to Information**
- a) Where a document is required to be open to inspection, this shall include published on the website of the council.
- b) Where a document is required to be published and made available at the council's offices, this shall include published on the website of the council.
- c) Where there is a requirement to publish information including public notices, agendas, minutes, background papers and written reports, this shall include published on the website of the council.
- 3) Remote Access to Meetings**
- a) The definition of meeting within the Council's standing orders is amended so that

- c) Subject to 5 b) the Chairman may if appropriate

conditions for remote attendance at 5 a) are not met.

b) A member of the public in remote attendance will be deemed to have left the meeting where, at any point in time during the meeting, any of the

Chairman

those wishing to speak during the public session or as invited by the seen by other members of the public attending the meeting including

iii) hear and where practicable see and so be heard and where practicable

seen by members of the council at the meeting

i) A member of the public is in remote attendance when they can :

ii) count the number of councillors in attendance for the purpose of the quorum

re-established

iv) adjourn the meeting to permit conditions for remote attendance to be

c) Subject to 4 b) the Chairman may if appropriate

remote attendance at 4 a) are not met.

b) A councillor in remote attendance will be deemed to have left the meeting where, at any point in time during the meeting, any of the conditions for

Chairman

participate during the public session of the meeting or as invited by the seen by other members of the public wishing to

ii) hear and where practicable see other members of the council

of the quorum when they can;

a) A councillor in remote attendance is present and counted for the purposes

1) Councillors in Remote Attendance

c) If public access cannot be restored within a reasonable period, the remaining business shall be deferred to a future meeting.

b) If the Council becomes aware that its technology has failed, and the meeting is no longer accessible to the public, the meeting shall be adjourned.

iii) where a meeting is accessible to the public whether or not members of the public are able to attend the meeting in person.

ii) including video conferencing, live webcasting and interactive streaming

iii) open to the public, includes access to the meeting by remote means

numbers

i) place, includes where a meeting is held, or to be held in more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone

Minute reference.....

ADOPTED at a meeting held on

the meeting.

- b) Each councillor present shall declare that there are no other persons present who are not entitled to be (hearing or seeing), and/or recording of the press and public will be severed
- a) The means of remote attendance and access to the meeting by members of the meeting, due to the confidentiality of the business to be discussed then where the council has resolved to exclude the press and public from any part of the meeting, unless a councillor is required to leave the room as a requirement of the council's code of conduct, the means of remote attendance and access will be severed whilst any discussion or vote take place.
- 8) Exclusion of the press and public**

Where a councillor is required to leave the room as a requirement of the council's code of conduct, the means of remote attendance and access will be severed whilst any discussion or vote take place.

7) Code of Conduct – councillors excluded from the meeting

- a) confirmation of the meeting that there is agreement or amendment or abstaining will be recorded.
- b) a roll call and the number of votes for or against the motion or unless a recorded vote is demanded, the Chair will take the vote by :

6) Remote Voting

- i) adjourn the meeting to permit conditions for remote attendance to be re-established
- ii) vary the order of the agenda or complete the remaining business of the meeting in the absence of the member of the public in remote attendance.