



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI) POLICY

1. Purpose of this Policy

Yalding Parish Council (YPC) is committed to openness, transparency and accountability. This policy sets out how The Council complies with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and how members of the public may request information.

The Council adopts the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) Model Publication Scheme and makes information available proactively wherever possible.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all recorded information held by YPC, including:

- Paper records
- Emails and electronic files
- Audio or video recordings
- Maps, plans, photographs
- Information held on behalf of The Council

FOIA does not cover:

- Personal data (handled under UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and The Council's Subject Access Request (SAR) Procedure)
- Environmental information (handled under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) if applicable)

3. The Publication Scheme

The Council publishes information routinely through its Publication Scheme, which sets out:

- What information is available
- How it can be accessed
- Whether a charge applies

If information is already available through the Publication Scheme, The Council will direct the requester to that source rather than processing the request under FOIA.

4. Making a Freedom of Information Request

An FOI request must:

- Be in writing (letter or email)
- Include the requester's name and contact postal address
- Describe the information requested clearly

Requests should be sent either:

by Royal Mail or courier to:

The Clerk
Yalding Parish Council
PO Box 873
Yalding, Maidstone, Kent, ME18 6YW

or

by email to:

clerk@yaldingparishcouncil.gov.uk

The Council does not require a telephone number or the reason for the request.

A FOI Request Form, which can be found on The Council's website, is available to assist applicants but its use is optional.

5. How The Council Handles Requests

Upon receiving a request, The Clerk to the Council will:

- Acknowledge receipt
- Confirm whether the information is held
- Process the request under FOIA, EIR or UK GDPR as appropriate
- Provide advice and assistance where needed
- Respond within 20 working days from and including the working day following receipt of the request.

If clarification is required, the 20 day period pauses until clarification is received.

If a fee is required, the 20 day period restarts when payment is received.

6. Information The Council may withhold

The Council may refuse a request if:

- An exemption applies under FOIA
- The request is vexatious
- The request is repeated
- The cost of compliance exceeds the statutory limit (£450)

Where an exemption is applied, The Council will:

- Confirm the exemption relied upon
- Explain why it applies
- Apply the public interest test where required

7. Consultation with Third Parties

If the information requested relates to a third party and disclosure may affect their rights or interests, The Council may consult with them before responding. The final decision rests with The Council.

8. Format of Information Provided

Where reasonably practicable, The Council will provide information in the format requested, including:

- Email
- Paper copies
- Inspection at the Parish Office (by appointment)
- Large print or alternative formats

9. Fees and Charges

Most FOI requests are provided free of charge.

The Council will charge for:

- Photocopying or printing
- Postage
- Costs of producing information in alternative formats
- Costs of locating, retrieving and extracting information only where the total exceeds the statutory cost limit

Charges are based on:

- 10p per A4 black and white copy
- Actual postage costs
- Actual costs for specialist copying or large documents

If a fee applies, the requester will be notified in writing. The request will not be processed until payment is received.

10. Requests Exceeding the Cost Limit

If the estimated cost of locating, retrieving and extracting the information exceeds £450 (18 hours at £25/hour), the Council will either:

- Refuse the request, or
- Offer to provide the information if the requester agrees to pay the full cost

The Council will always offer advice on how the request could be refined to fall within the limit.

11. Complaints and Appeals

If a requester is dissatisfied with the handling of their request, they may request an internal review.

- Stage 1 – Review by The Clerk
- Stage 2 – Review by The Chairman of The Parish Council

If the requester remains dissatisfied, they may appeal to The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) - www.ico.org.uk

12. Responsibilities

The Parish Clerk is responsible for managing FOI requests, maintaining records, and ensuring compliance.

Councillors and staff must support The Clerk by ensuring information is stored, retained and retrieved in accordance with Council policies.

Adopted 03 March 2026

To be reviewed annually at the Annual Parish Council Meeting (see minutes of that meeting).