HANDLING REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Date Adopted/Amended:	Minute Ref:	Review Cycle:
01/09/25	25.77	**Annually**

POLICY

The Parish Council has adopted a Model Publication Scheme. This represents the Council's commitment to release information proactively. A guide detailing the information routinely published and how this information can be accessed is available on the Council's website (www.actonbridge-pc.gov.uk) or as a hard copy from the Parish Clerk.

Information which is not routinely published will be considered for release on receipt of a written request (e-mail is acceptable). The Clerk will respond within the statutory 20 working days, as per legislation. Advice and assistance will be given to help people who propose to or have made a request for information.

Details of information that has been provided by the Council in response to requests will be published on a Disclosure Log under the Council's Publication Scheme.

PROCEDURE

(1) Authors of verbal requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) will be asked to put their request in written form (e-mail will be accepted) giving their name, correspondence address and details of the information required. Information requests under the Environmental Information Regulations Act 2004 (EIR) do not necessarily need to be in writing, but a written record of the conversation must be kept.

(2) Requests for information do not need to refer to FOI or EIR

(3) The Clerk may ask for the request to be reformulated to ensure that the description of information requested is valid. If there is difficulty in identifying or locating information the applicant will be asked to provide further details.

(4) Responses to requests must be made within the statutory 20 working days. If an exemption is being considered the applicant must be advised and given an estimated date of response. The Freedom of Information fact sheet will be issued with the response.

(5) The Clerk will check whether the Council holds the information requested. If the Council does not hold the information (or the request is to be transferred to a more appropriate public authority) the applicant will be advised and given details as to

why the information is not held including if it has been destroyed; provided that to confirm or deny information is held is not exempt.

(6) A Fees Notice will be issued (if applicable) confirming that the information is held and giving an estimate of the cost of providing the information up to £450. The Council may refuse requests which exceed the limit. In this instance a refusal notice will be issued which will include confirmation as to whether the information is held or not (unless the costs of this will exceed the limit) and the cost of retrieving the information. The applicant may reformulate their request; the Council will provide advice and assistance as appropriate.

(7) Where a fee is to be charged, no information will be released until after the fee has been received. The statutory 20 working day period will be extended by up to three months awaiting pay. After the fee is received a response will be given within the statutory 20 working days.

(8) The information requested will be checked for exemptions. If an exemption applies, the Council will issue a Refusal Notice stating upon which exemption it is relying and the reason why the exemption applies (if not apparent). The Council is not required to confirm or deny whether it holds information if this constitutes disclosure of exempt information. The Refusal Notice will be issued together with the Council's procedure for dealing with complaints and details of the Information Commissioner's Office should be applicant with to exercise their right to complain to them.

(9) Provided the fee is paid (if applicable) and no exemptions apply, the Council is obliged to disclose the information.

A formal system of logging requests and recording all key actions will be kept by the Council.