

Black Torrington Parish Council Freedom of Information (Quick Guide and Procedure)

1. Freedom of information requests must be **in writing**, give the name and a return email or postal address of the person requesting the information, and describe the information that is being requested. It does not need to mention the Freedom of Information Act.

2. Send the request to (clerkblacktorrington@outlook.com) or robertspg@aol.com

3. A response must be made within twenty working days.

4. If the request is unclear or vague, the Council is obliged to provide reasonable assistance to the person who made the request. This means more than simply telling them that their request is not specific enough. Reasonable steps should be taken to provide assistance to the requester. The aim should be to assist the requester to refine their request so that it becomes specific enough to identify the information they want.

5. Most requests can be easily dealt with.

6. If the request is for a large amount of information, we should consider if complying with the request would exceed the 'appropriate limit' of £450 (approx 2 ½ days work) under the fees regulations. If complying with a request would exceed the appropriate limit, we can refuse the request. However, we should help the requester to try to narrow or refine the request. *Please contact the Parish Clerk or Parish Council Chairman before refusing a request.*

7. Wherever possible information should be provided electronically (saving paper, copying and postage charges). If a request specifically asks for printed copies then the following charges can be made: 10p per side A4, 20p per side A3 (if it is an externally produced document the actual cost to us to produce the document) and postage at cost (larger than A3 – cost of copying). Payment should be made in advance before the information is sent.

8. **All responses to FOI requests need to include** the following paragraph:
*If you have any complaints in respect of your information request, please write to the
Freedom of Information Officer at Torrington District Council, Riverbank House,
Bideford EX39 2QG.
If your complaint is not resolved to your complete satisfaction, you have the
right to apply to the Information Commissioner for a decision.*

9. As a general rule, members of the public are entitled to request any information created within the Council or received from elsewhere and held by the Council for any reason. This applies to information held in any format – physical or electronic documents, e-mails, microfiche etc. The ‘spirit’ of the Act is of full disclosure although there are some (23) exemptions applicable where certain information should not be released.

The main categories for exemption are:

- a. National security
- b. Law enforcement
- c. Commercial interest
- d. Personal data

A guide to the exemptions can be found on the intranet. Please contact Parish Clerk or Chairman of Parish Council before relying on an exemption and refusing a request for information.

For Further details contact: clerkblacktorrington@outlook.com

Date of Approval.....

Signature of Chairman.....