Freedom of Information Act Policy/Model Publication Scheme
Lytchett Matravers Parish Council

---

1. Introduction
Lytchett Matravers Parish Council is committed to openness, transparency, and accountability. This policy outlines how the Council complies with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR), ensuring the public's right to access information.

---

2. Purpose
The purpose of this policy is to:

- Explain the Council's obligations under the FOIA and EIR.
- Provide a clear procedure for handling requests for information.
- Promote the availability of Council information to the public.

---

3. Scope
This policy applies to all recorded information held by Lytchett Matravers Parish Council, regardless of format (e.g., paper, electronic, audio). It includes:

- Council minutes, reports, and decisions.
- Financial records and budgets.
- Policies, procedures, and governance documents.
- Information about Council services and activities.

---

4. Publication Scheme
Lytchett Matravers Parish Council has adopted the model Publication Scheme approved by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The scheme outlines:

- Classes of information available.
- Methods of publication.
- Charges for providing information (if applicable).

---

5. Making a Request for Information
Under the FOIA, any person can make a request for recorded information. Requests must:

- Be in writing (email or letter).
- Include the requester's name, contact details, and a clear description of the information required.

Requests should be sent to:

Mrs Julie Wigg, Parish Clerk
Lytchett Matravers Parish Council
Vineyard Close, Lytchett Matravers, Poole, Dorset BH16 6DD
Email: clerk@lytchettmatraversparishcouncil.gov.uk

---

6. Handling Requests
Upon receiving a request, the Council will:

1. Acknowledge receipt within 5 working days.
2. Provide the requested information within 20 working days, unless an exemption applies or clarification is needed.
3. Inform the requester if:

- Additional time is required (e.g., for complex requests).
- The request is refused, stating the reasons and the relevant exemption(s).

---

7. Exemptions

Certain information may be exempt from disclosure under the FOIA, such as:

- Personal data (protected under the UK GDPR).
- Information provided in confidence.
- Commercially sensitive information.
- Information that would prejudice legal proceedings or law enforcement.

If an exemption applies, the Council will explain why the information cannot be disclosed and provide details of the requester's right to appeal.

---

8. Charges and Fees

Information available through the Publication Scheme is generally provided free of charge. However, the Council reserves the right to charge for:

- Printing, photocopying, and postage costs.
- Staff time exceeding the FOIA cost threshold (£450 or 18 hours).

Any fees will be communicated to the requester before processing the request.

---

9. Environmental Information Regulations (EIR)

Requests for environmental information are handled under the EIR. These requests:

- Can be made verbally or in writing.
- May include information about land, air, water, energy, waste, and policies affecting the environment.

The Council will respond to EIR requests within 20 working days, extending to 40 working days for complex cases.

---

10. Complaints and Appeals

If a requester is dissatisfied with the Council's response, they may:

1. Request an internal review by writing to the Parish Clerk.
2. If unresolved, contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO):
    - **Website:** www.ico.org.uk
    - **Telephone:** 0303 123 1113
    - **Address:** Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

---

11. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required by changes in legislation. Updates will be approved by the Council and published on the Council's website.

Reviewed 26th March 2025
Next review date: March 2026