MAULDEN PARISH COUNCIL
Freedom Of Information Policy

Adopted: September 6, 2021
Next Review Date: Annually

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This policy summarises Maulden Parish Council's (MPC's) general principles and outlines its expectations for providing information through requests made under the Freedom Of Information Act 2000 in accordance with the Model Publication Scheme.
1.2. MPC are registered with the Information Commissioner – reference number ZA353315.

2. WHAT INFORMATION CAN BE REQUESTED

2.1. Members of the public have a right to request any recorded information held by MPC.
2.2. "Recorded information" includes information held on computers, in emails and in printed or handwritten documents as well as images, video and audio recordings.
2.3. Before making a request, it may help to consider the following questions:

2.3.1. Is the information already available? For example, is it on MPC's website?
2.3.2. Are MPC likely to have the information – eg is the information held by MPC or Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC)?
2.3.3. Is the information required suitable for general publication?

3. HOW INFORMATION CAN BE REQUESTED

3.1. Members of the public must:

3.1.1. Contact MPC directly via the Clerk (contact details available on MPC's website).
3.1.2. Make the request in writing, eg in a letter or an email.
3.1.3. Provide their name and an address to which the reply can be sent, eg postal or email address.
3.1.4. Identify the information requested as clearly as possible.
3.1.5. Specify how the information requested should be supplied if possible, eg paper copy, email, inspection of documents.

3.2. MPC have a duty to make sure that their services are accessible to all service users. Responses can be requested in a particular format that is accessible to individuals, such as Braille, large print, email or audio format.

4. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A REQUEST IS MADE

4.1. MPC will reply to the applicant within 20 working days of receiving a written request. In their response MPC may:

4.2.1. Provide the information requested.
4.2.2. Confirm that they do not have the information requested.
4.2.3. Advise that another authority holds the information.
4.2.4. Say they have the information and offer to provide it if the applicant pays a fee.
4.2.5. Say they need more time to consider the public interest in disclosing or withholding the information, and advise when to expect a response. This should not be later than 40 working days after the date of the request.
4.2.6. Refuse to supply the information, and explain why. Reasons for refusal may include that the request would cost too much or take too much staff time to deal with it; the request repeats a previous request from the same person; the request is vexatious; the request involves commercially sensitive and confidential information; the information is still in draft form; the information has been archived or is difficult to access; the information is exempt from disclosure under the Freedom Of Information Act; part of the document is exempt from disclosure and it would not be practical to publish the information in a redacted form.

5. FEES

5.1. MPC may charge for answering Freedom Of Information requests in the following circumstances:

5.1.1. To cover disbursement costs such as printing, photocopying and postage. MPC will charge the applicant 10p per sheet for photocopying and printing documents, and also recover the actual costs of postage or any other transmission costs from the applicant.
5.1.2. When estimated staff costs involved in locating or compiling the information exceed £450.00. Under these circumstances MPC can refuse the request on the grounds of cost, or charge the applicant £20 per hour, plus disbursements for the estimated work.
5.1.3. When the total cost for a series of requests from the same applicant within a 12-week period exceed £450.00. Under these circumstances MPC will charge the applicant £20 per hour, plus disbursements for the work that exceeds £450.00.

5.2. If the estimated cost of a request exceeds £450.00 and it is agreed to release the information and make a charge MPC will:

5.2.1. Issue a fee notice to the applicant requesting the appropriate fee.
5.2.2. Not answer the request until the fee has been paid.
5.2.3. Incur any additional cost if the actual cost of answering the request is greater than that requested in the fee notice.

5.2.4. Refund the difference to the applicant if the actual cost of answering the request is less than that requested in the fee notice.

6. COMPLAINTS

6.1. If an applicant is dissatisfied with the response received following a Freedom Of Information request then they should put the complaint in writing, providing any supporting evidence, to the clerk requesting an internal review. MPC recommend that complaints are made as soon as possible but must happen within two calendar months of receiving MPC's response following a Freedom Of Information request. The clerk will respond to the complaint within 40 working days.

6.2. If an applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal review they should make a complaint in writing, providing any supporting evidence, to the clerk. The complaint will be referred to the MPC chairman, who will investigate and respond to the complaint within 40 working days.

6.3. If, after pursuing the above complaints process, an applicant is still dissatisfied with the response given they may refer the matter to the Information Commissioner (contact details below) for a decision on whether the request for information has been dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom Of Information Act 2000.

MPC's ICO reference number is **ZA353315**, and the ICO contact details are:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House, Water Lane
Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF
Email: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk
Telephone: 0303 123 1113

7. INFORMATION PUBLICATION

Class 1 – Who We Are And What We Do
(Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts – current information only)

- Who's who on MPC and their Working Groups.
- Contact details for MPC's Clerk and Cllrs.

(Contact details for MPC's Clerk and Cllrs and how to obtain other Class 1 information is available on MPC Noticeboards as well as on the website – refer to https://maulden-pc.gov.uk for details. All Class 1 information is in hard-copy format, available upon written request to the clerk at 10p per A4 sheet.)

Class 2 – What We Spend And How We Spend It
(Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit – current and previous financial year only)

- Annual return form and report by auditor.
- Finalised budget.
- Precept.
- Financial Regulations and Standing Orders.
- Grants given and received.
- List of current contracts awarded and value of contract.
- Members' expenses.

(Some Class 2 Information is available on the MPC website – refer to https://maulden-pc.gov.uk for details. All Class 2 information is in hard-copy format, available upon written request to the clerk at 10p per A4 sheet.)

Class 3 – What Our Priorities Are And How We Are Doing
(Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews)

- Parish Plan (current and previous year as a minimum).
- Chairman's Annual Report to Parish Meeting (current and previous year as a minimum).

(Some Class 3 Information is available on the MPC website – refer to https://maulden-pc.gov.uk for details. All Class 3 information is in hard-copy format, available upon written request to the clerk at 10p per A4 sheet.)

Class 4 – How We Make Decisions
(Decision-making processes and records of decisions – current and previous year only)

- Timetable of meetings (MPC, any committee/sub-committee and parish meetings).
- Agendas of meetings (MPC, any committee/sub-committee and parish meetings).
- Minutes of meetings (MPC, any committee/sub-committee and parish meetings) – this will exclude information properly regarded as private to the meeting.
- Reports presented to MPC meetings – this will exclude information properly regarded as private to the meeting.
- Responses to consultation papers.
- Responses to planning applications.

(Some Class 4 Information is available on the MPC website – refer to https://maulden-pc.gov.uk for details. All Class 4 information is in hard-copy format, available upon written request to the clerk at 10p per A4 sheet.)

Class 5 – Our Policies And Procedures
(Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities)

- Policies and procedures for the conduct of MPC business.
- Procedural Standing Orders.
- Committee and sub-committee terms of reference.
- Delegated authority in respect of officers.
- Code Of Conduct.
- Policies and procedures for the provision of services and about the employment of staff.
- Equality & Diversity Policy.
- Health & Safety Policy.
- Recruitment policies (including current vacancies).
- Policies and procedures for handling requests for information.
- Schedule of charges (for the publication of information).
- Complaints procedures (including those covering requests for information and operating the publication scheme).
- Information Technology (IT) Policy.
- Records management policies (records retention, destruction and archive).
- Data Protection Policy.

(All Class 5 Information is available on the MPC website – refer to https://maulden-pc.gov.uk for details. All Class 5 information is in hard-copy format, available upon written request to the clerk at 10p per A4 sheet.)

Class 6 – Lists & Registers
(Currently maintained lists and registers only)

- Assets Register.
- Land Registry information.
- Register of members' interests (*held by Central Bedfordshire Council*).
- Register of gifts and hospitality.

(Some Class 6 Information is available on the MPC website – refer to https://maulden-pc.gov.uk for details. All Class 6 information is in hard-copy format, available upon written request to the clerk at 10p per A4 sheet.)

Class 7 – The Services We Offer
(Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters produced for the public and businesses – current information only)

- Allotments.
- Agency agreements.
- Bus shelters.
- Litter bins, dog bins.
- Parks, playing fields and recreational facilities.
- Seating and lighting.

(All Class 7 information is in hard-copy format only, available upon written request to the clerk at 10p per A4 sheet.)