



Wells City Council

Freedom of Information Policy

Document No. 19

Purpose	Guidance to clarify Wells City Council's policy regarding information technology
Additional Papers	To be read in conjunction with the Data Retention Policy
Reviewed by	Full Council
Adopted	March 2026
Review Date	March 2028

1. Policy Statement

This policy is a guide on how to handle information requests for Wells City Council. The Council will process information requests in line with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (herein referred to as “the Act”) and the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (herein referred to as “GDPR”).

2. Introduction

The Act gives the right of access, by any individual or corporate body, to all types of recorded information held by public bodies such as local councils and parish meetings. Individuals also have the right to access any digitally recorded information, and most paper files, under the GDPR. This is known as the “subject access right”.

These acts allow access to all types of information held whether personal or non-personal. This may include information about third parties, but account must be taken of the GDPR before releasing any such personal information.

The purpose of the Act is to give the public greater access to information about the workings of government and public bodies, to make public bodies accountable to the public and enable transparency in the operation of public bodies.

3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all employees of Wells City Council (herein referred to as “the Council”)

4. Review Statement

This Policy has been prepared considering prevailing legislation and recognised good practice. New legislation requirements or changes in current legislation may necessitate the review of this policy document. The Council will continue to review and amend all/part of this policy on a regular basis. It is the employee’s responsibility to ensure that the copy of the policy being referred to is the most up-to-date version.

5. Equality

In putting this procedure into practice, no aspect of the procedure will discriminate on the grounds of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, religion, politics, marital status, disability, union membership or any other grounds likely to place an employee at disadvantage.

6. The Model Publication Scheme

The Council adopted the most recent Model Publication Scheme (henceforth referred to as “the Scheme”) on 16 August 2023. This scheme enables members of the public to view and access information held by the Council, and is attached to this policy as **Appendix A**.

7. Obtaining Information and Information Held

There are three ways to obtain information on the Council:

1. Wells City Council website – www.wells.gov.uk
The website holds the type of information which the Council routinely publishes e.g. minutes and agendas.
2. Inspect Documents held by the Town Clerk
Anyone wishing to view certain documents should contact the Town Clerk, either via the facility on the website, by telephone, by email or in writing. Some documents require some time to locate so it may be necessary to make an appointment. Hours of work are:
 - Monday to Friday, between 9.00am and 4.00pm
3. Individual Written Request
If the information is not included in the Scheme or on the website, a written request can be sent to:
 - Town Clerk, Wells City Council, Town Hall, Market PI, Wells, BA5 2RB
 - Requests must include name, address for correspondence, and a description of the information required.

8. Council's Response to a Written Request

The Council will acknowledge a request under the Act as soon as practicable, outlining the deadline date a response will be delivered. Within 20 working days of receipt of the written request, the Council will:

- Conform whether or not it holds the information
- Advise if a fee will be charged
- Provide the information (after any relevant fees have been paid) unless an exemption applies (see '10. Exemptions')

9. Fees

The Act only allows the Council to charge for answering Freedom of Information requests in the following circumstances:

1. Disbursement costs such as printing, photocopying and postage; and
2. When estimated staff costs involved in locating and/or compiling the information exceed £450. Under these circumstances, the Council can refuse the request on the grounds of cost, or charge the applicant £20 per hour, plus disbursements for the estimated work.

For the majority of requests, or a series of requests from the same applicant within a 12-month period, it is expected that the charge for locating and compiling information will be less than £450 and therefore, except for disbursement costs, no reimbursement can be sought. However, where costs are estimated to exceed £450 (based on an hourly charge-out rate of £20), the Council can decide to

- Refuse the request; or
- Comply with the request and charge for allowable costs as prescribed in the regulations; or
- Comply with the request free of charge.

If the estimated cost of a request is more than £450, and it is decided the release the information and make a charge for the information then:

- A fee notice will be sent to the application requesting the appropriate fee.
- The request will not be answered until the fee has been received.

- If the actual cost of completing the request is more than the estimate, then the Council will incur the additional cost.
- Where the cost is less than the estimated cost then the difference will be refunded to the applicant.

For disbursement costs, it is proposed that the Council will charge 10p per sheet (black and white) and 20p (colour) for photocopying and printing documents, and recover the actual cost of postage or any other transmission costs for the applicant.

10. Exemptions

Some information may not be provided by the Council as there are 23 exemptions in the Act, for example personal data about individuals which is protected by GDPR, or commercially confidential information.

11. Further Help

If you are not satisfied with the response of your request from the Council under the Act, you may request an internal review. The response will be reviewed by an independent officer. The conclusion of the internal review process is the final step of the process within the Council's remit. If you are not satisfied, please refer to the complaints process outlined below, to be sent directly to the Information Commissioner's Office. Detailed guidance can also be found on the website of the Information Commissioner: www.ico.org.uk

12. Complaints

Complaints linked to dissatisfaction with the response from the Council should be made in writing to the Town Clerk at the address listed (see '7. Obtaining Information and Information Held'). If complains cannot be resolved the Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113

Further information on the Information Commissioner's Office can be found on the website at www.ico.org.uk

13. Further Information

Contact details:

Town Clerk

Town Hall

Market Place

Wells BA5 2RB

Tel: 01749 673091 e-mail: townclerk@wells.gov.uk

APPENDIX A: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

available from Wells City Council under the model publication scheme

Information to be published	How this information can be obtained
<p>Class 1 - Who we are and what we do</p> <p>(Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts)</p> <p>Current information only</p>	
Who's who on the List of Council members and its Committees	Hard copy from Town Hall, Wells BA5 2RB
Contact details for Parish Clerk and Council members (named contacts where possible with telephone number and email address (if used))	This Website
Location of Council office and accessibility details	
Staffing structure	
<p>Class 2 - What we spend and how we spend it</p> <p>(Financial information relating to projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit)</p> <p>Current and previous financial year as a minimum</p>	
Annual return form and report by auditor	Hard copy from Town Hall, Wells BA5 2RB
Finalised budget	This Website
Precept	
Borrowing Approval letter	
Financial Standing Orders and Regulations	
Grants given and received	
List of current contracts awarded and value of contract	
Members' allowances and expenses	n/a

Information to be published	How this information can be obtained
<p>Class 3 - What our priorities are and how we are doing</p> <p>(Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews)</p>	n/a
Parish Plan (current and previous year as a minimum)	
Annual Report to Parish or Community Meeting (current and previous year as a minimum)	
Quality status	
Local charters drawn up in accordance with DCLG guidelines	
<p>Class 4 - How we make decisions</p> <p>(Decision making processes and records of decisions)</p> <p>Current and previous council year as a minimum</p>	Hard copy from Town Hall, Wells BA5 2RB This Website
Timetable of meetings (Council, any committee/sub-committee meetings and parish meetings)	
Agendas of meetings (as above)	
Minutes of meetings (as above) NB. This will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meeting.	
<p>Reports presented to council meetings</p> <p>NB. This will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meeting.</p>	Hard copy only
Responses to consultation papers	
Responses to planning applications	
Bye-laws	n/a

Information to be published	How this information can be obtained
<p>Class 5 - Our policies and procedures</p> <p>(Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities)</p> <p>Current information only</p>	<p>Hard copy from Town Hall, Wells BA5 2RB</p> <p>This Website</p>
<p>Policies and procedures for the conduct of council business:</p> <p>Procedural standing orders</p> <p>Committee and sub-committee terms of reference</p> <p>Delegated authority in respect of officers</p> <p>Code of Conduct</p> <p>Policy statements</p>	<p>Hard copy only</p>
<p>Policies and procedures for the provision of services and about the employment of staff:</p> <p>Internal policies relating to the delivery of services</p> <p>Equality and diversity policy</p> <p>Health and safety policy</p> <p>Recruitment policies (including current vacancies)</p> <p>Policies and procedures for handling requests for information</p> <p>Complaints procedures (including those covering requests for information and operating the publication scheme)</p>	<p>Hard copy only</p>
<p>Information security policy</p>	<p>Hard copy only</p>
<p>Records management policies (records retention, destruction and archive)</p>	
<p>Data protection policies</p>	
<p>Schedule of charges (for the publication of information)</p>	

Information to be published	How this information can be obtained
Class 6 - Lists and Registers	
Currently maintained lists and registers only	
Any publicly available register or list (if any are held this should be publicised; in most circumstances existing access provisions will suffice)	Hard copy from Town Hall, Wells BA5 2RB
Assets Register	
Disclosure log (indicating the information that has been provided in response to requests; recommended as good practice, but may not be held by parish councils)	n/a
Register of members' interests	Hard copy from Town Hall, Wells BA5 2RB
Register of gifts and hospitality	Hard copy from Town Hall, Wells BA5 2RB
Class 7 - The services we offer	
(Information about the services we offer, including leaflets, guidance and newsletters produced for the public and businesses)	
This will be current information only	
Allotments	
Cemetery	Hard copy from Town Hall, Wells BA5 2RB
Wells Town Hall	Hard copy from Town Hall, Wells BA5 2RB
Wells in Bloom	This Website
Funfairs	
Skatepark	
Public conveniences	
Agency agreements	
A summary of services for which the council is entitled to recover a fee, together with those fees (e.g. burial fees)	