PEMBRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

Approved on	Minute no	Signed……..
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This policy was updated and adopted by Pembridge Parish Council (the Council) in November 2015, in line with the adoption of the model publication scheme and applies to all employees, and those acting on the Council's behalf.

The model publication scheme enables members of the public to view and access information held by the Parish Council. The Freedom of Information Act 2000, which came into force in January 2005, extends a right to allow access to all types of information held whether personal or non-personal. This may include information about third parties but account must, of course, be taken of the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 before releasing any such personal information.

The Act gives individuals (known as 'applicants') two related rights:

- The right to be told whether the information exists; and
- The right to receive the information.

Applicants, will be required to make detailed requests for information in writing or by E Mail, not by telephone. These will be responded to within 20 working days. It will not be necessary to comply with 'vexatious' or 'repeated' requests where a response has recently been sent to an identical or substantially similar request from the same person.

Whilst the Act creates a general right of access to information held by parish councils, there are two categories of exemptions – known as "Absolute Exemptions" and "Qualified Exemptions" respectively.

Where information falls within the scope of an "absolute exemption" there is no obligation to communicate it to an applicant. "Absolute Exemptions" include the following types of information:-

- Information from, or relating to, certain security bodies
- Information contained in court records, and
- Information provided in confidence

In the case of "qualified exemptions", however, a parish council will have to go on to consider whether it must override the exemption because it is in the public interest to release the information. The following exemptions are examples of "Qualified Exemptions":-

- Environmental information
- Health and safety
- Personal information
- Legal professional privilege and
- Commercial interests

There a several ways to obtain Information:

1. Pembridge Parish Council web site holds the routinely published documents freely available

- Minutes
- Agenda
- Policies
- Councillor details
- Year-end financial documents

2. Inspection of documents held by the Clerk, please note some documents require some time to locate, so it may be necessary to make an appointment to see them
3. Written Request for information is not included in the publication scheme or on the web site, you may send a written request to Pembridge Parish Clerk. Your request must include your name, address for correspondence, and a description of the information you require

The following charges have been set for the supply of information:
50p per A4 sheet for paper copies and current postage charge will apply.
£5 enquiry fee for any non-routine enquiry taking longer than 15 minutes, or £25 per hour
Full information to charges will be given before information requested. Charges are in accordance under section 11B of the Freedom of Information Act.

Requests for information must be made in writing, and should be sent to:

Pembridge Parish Clerk, Pembridge Parish Council, Firbanks, Lyonshall, Kington, HR5 3LN.

CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION THAT COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE:

- Minutes of council meetings – limited to the last 2 years
- Procedural Standing Orders
- Council's Annual Report to the Parish
- Agenda and supporting papers for council meetings –
  (Limited in each case to the forthcoming/immediate meeting)
- Members Declaration of Acceptance of Office
- Annual statutory report by auditor (internal & external) limited to the last financial year
- Receipt books, cheque books, bank statements for all accounts limited to the last financial year
- VAT records – limited to the last financial year
- Financial Standing Orders and regulations
- Assets register
- Risk Assessments
- Terms and conditions of employment
- Job descriptions

EXEMPTED CATEGORIES:

- Personal records of employees, appraisals, specific salary details & sickness records.
- Copies of Planning consultations, PROW maps etc. – these are available from the local planning authority.
- Quotations and Tenders, loan documentation and insurance policies or other commercially sensitive information.

If you are dissatisfied with the response from the Council then you should put your complaint in writing to the Clerk at the address above. If you are still dissatisfied, you may contact the Information Commissioner.