



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 gives the public access to information held by public authorities, unless there are good reasons to keep it confidential. It does this in 2 ways:

- by obliging public authorities to publish certain information about their activities
- by entitling members of the public to request information from public authorities

Our aim is to publish as much as possible on our website so that you can access it quickly without having to make a request. You can search the website using the box at the top right of each page.

If you can't find the information you want on our website, you can submit a written request to us for the information.

### Before you make a request

Before you send us a request, check whether we already publish the information you are looking for as information already accessible by other means is exempt from disclosure under the Act.

Some information may not be held by West Mersea Town Council but may instead be held by Colchester Borough Council or Essex County Council.

### Making a request

Please send your request for information to [info@westmersea.org](mailto:info@westmersea.org)

You will need to include:

- your full name
- a valid contact address (email or postal)
- a clear description of the information you wish to obtain
- your preference for how you want to receive the information

Please be as specific as you can about the information you want, including any dates. If we don't have enough information or if we need to clarify your request, we will try to contact you so you may also wish to include a contact telephone number.

West Mersea Town Council will only charge requesters for locating, retrieving and extracting information where we estimate it would exceed the appropriate limit (currently set as £450 for public authorities outside of central government under Section 12 of the FOIA 2000). We may also charge for actual expenses incurred in disclosing the information, such as printing or photocopying, postage or other forms of transmitting the information.

### How we handle a request

West Mersea Town Council, along with all public authorities, has two basic duties under the FOIA; to confirm or deny whether requested information is held and to provide the requester with the information.

If we intend to refuse a request for information, it will be under one of the exemptions set out in Part 2 of the Act or where it would exceed the cost limit or if it is a vexatious or repeat request. The FOIA exemptions are designated as either 'absolute' or 'qualified'. Absolute exemptions mean that the information does not have to be released. If the exemption is qualified, public authorities must test whether the public interest outweighs the authority maintaining the exemption.

### Further information

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is the UK's independent body set up to uphold information rights in the public interest. You can find a wealth of information and support on the Freedom of Information Act on their website [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

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