

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, all public authorities are required to:

- Adopt and maintain a publication scheme – Swanwick Parish Council adopted a scheme minute 130/2002 17 December 2002 refers,
- Publish information in accordance with the scheme; and
- Keep a scheme under review.

The Parish Council's publication scheme is a guide to the information that it automatically or routinely publishes and it is a way to make a significant amount of information available, without waiting for someone to specifically request it.

### Publication Scheme 2009

The Information Commissioner provided guidance on a new model for a publication scheme and all authorities will be expected to revise the publication scheme by the end of 2008. The new scheme contains seven classes of information as follows:

#### The Classes of Information:

**Who we are and what we do** - Organisational information, structure, locations and contacts

**What we spend and how we spend it** - Financial information about projected and actual income and expenditure, procurement, contracts and financial audit

**What our priorities are and how we are doing** - Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews

**How we make decisions** - Decision-making processes and records of decisions

**Our policies and procedures** - Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities

**Lists and registers** - Information held in registers required by statute and other lists and registers relating to the functions of the authority

**Services provided by the Council** - Information about the services the council provides including leaflets, guidance and newsletters

The Information Commissioner has provided a template, which is attached. It has been completed to show the information available, how it can be obtained and a recommended charge.

#### The Next Steps

***Adopt the Model Publication Scheme by 31 December 2008 at the latest.***

This can be done simply by passing a resolution to that effect. There is no need to send any documentation to the Information Commissioner seeking approval.

*In the alternative prepare and adopt a bespoke scheme which will need to be approved by the Information Commissioner.*

This is however not the recommended course of action.

### **Complete 'The Guide to Proactively Published Information'**

To do this Swanwick Parish Council will need to determine:

- what information it holds;
  - what format/s it will provide it in;
  - whether it is going to charge for provision of the information; for clarity charges can be made for disbursements e.g. photocopying, postage etc and officer time e.g. in retrieving the information etc. *With regard to officer time however the expectation is that charging will be very much the exception rather than the norm as the information which is contained in the publication scheme ought to be routinely available and readily retrievable;*
  - the level of any charges (which must be stated on a schedule of charges and then inserted on the guide itself); and
  - the name of the individual/s to whom requests for information should be directed (in particular the name of the person to whom requests to inspect in person should be directed)
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- If Swanwick Parish Council does not hold the information listed in the Guide it can simply be deleted (by crossing it through) in its entirety.
  - The second column Swanwick Parish Council is required to insert details of how (i.e. in what format) the information can be obtained. Swanwick Parish Council will soon have an active website and will be obliged to indicate that the information can be downloaded from it. In the meantime it will need to indicate that the information will be supplied in hard copy. However it is also recognised that certain types of information only 'lends' itself to inspection in person and this can be indicated on the Guide.
  - The third column relates to the cost of providing the information. If Swanwick Parish Council decides that it is going to raise a charge then it should insert the actual cost of providing the information here. The basis of this cost together with how it has been calculated should be made available by means of a separate schedule of charges. The guidance issued by the Information Commissioner is that councils and parish meetings can recover the actual cost of any disbursements (e.g. photocopying and postage) which are incurred. However the recommendation is that with regard to photocopying and printing the charge should not exceed 10p per sheet.
  - Thus in summary this Council i) decide whether it is going to charge for provision of the information, ii) complete the schedule of charges and then iii) insert the actual cost in the third column of the Guide.

- The Parish Council must also specify the details of the person to be contacted by those applicants who wish to view the information in person or to take account of the possibility that certain information only lends itself to be viewed in person.

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***Publish the Guide***

This can be done by including the Guide on the website and displayed on the council's notice board

**RECOMMENDED**

- a. That Swanwick Parish Council formally adopts the scheme
- b. That the charge for information requested is free of charge from the website and where a hard copy is requested 10p/sheet plus the actual cost of any postage
- c. The Clerk shall be defined as the person to be contacted by those applicants who wish to view the information in person
- d. In taking into account of the possibility that certain information only lends itself to be viewed in person the opening times of the Parish Council's office will be published