



MSG PARISH COUNCIL

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

Introduction

The Freedom of Information Act 2000:

- Provides public access to recorded information held by public bodies – including local authorities such as Middleton St. George Parish Council.
- Applies to documentary information and electronic data held by a public body.
- Obliges public bodies to disclose information/data unless an exemption detailed in the legislation is applicable. General enquiries

If you have any queries regarding the Freedom of Information Act, please contact the parish clerk (Alan Macnab) by telephone (01325 482015) or by e-mail clerk@middleton-st-george.org.uk

1. Requests for information

Requests for information must be in writing and include the enquirer's name and address (a contact telephone number would be helpful though not essential).

Requests can either be in paper format addressed to Middleton St. George Parish Council, 5, Whitebridge Drive, Whinfield Park, Darlington, DL1 3TY or in electronic format via e-mail to clerk@middleton-st-george.org.uk

When requesting information the enquirer does not have to mention the Freedom of Information Act nor the reason(s) why the information is sought.

The enquirer does not necessarily have to be resident in the parish.

The enquirer can be an individual or an organisation.

The parish clerk is responsible for responding to requests.

Middleton St. George Parish Council has a duty to respond to all requests by informing the enquirer whether or not it holds the requested information and then supplying the information (except where an exemption applies).

Charges can be made in respect of disbursement costs (copying, printing, postage etc) to reflect the costs incurred in meeting a request.

Charges will not be made for staff time in sourcing information if the estimated cost is less than £450.00 or 18 hours.

Requests can be denied if the staffing cost necessary to retrieve/supply the information is greater than £450 or 18 hours (as per exemption 12). Alternatively, a fee notice can be issued setting out the intended amount to be charged for the supply of the requested information.

Requests can be denied (wholly or in part) if an exemption applies. The Freedom of Information Act contains 32 exemptions but not all of them are applicable to Middleton St. George Parish Council.

The exemptions that are most likely to apply to Middleton St. George Parish Council are listed below (the list is not exhaustive).

- (i) If the request exceeds the cost limit (as already mentioned).
- (ii) If the requested information is accessible by other means.
- (iii) If the requested information is intended for future publication.
- (iv) If the requested information would prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs.

Requests for personal information in respect of the enquirer him/herself cannot be dealt with by the Freedom of Information Act. Such requests should be submitted in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Middleton St. George Parish Council is statutorily obliged to respond to requests within 20 working days. The day after the request is received is the first day of the 20 (working) days.

If a request is too vague and/or insufficiently clear, the enquirer will be contacted for clarification. However, the 20 days response timescale would commence the day after a sufficiently clear request has been received.

If Middleton St. George Parish Council does not hold all the requested information, it will supply the information it does hold and provide guidance as to whom to contact to obtain the remainder of the information.

If the response is not satisfactory, the enquirer can request a review by contacting either

- (a) the Chairman of Middleton St. George Parish Council, Email a.marshall@middleton-st-george.org.uk and/or
- (b) Complaints and Information Governance Team, Darlington Borough Council, Town Hall, Darlington, DL1 5QT. Email freedomofinformation@darlington.gov.uk

If a review is requested it will be completed within 20 working days (or within 40 working days in exceptional cases).

If the review(s) is not satisfactory, the enquirer has a right of appeal to the Information Commissioner (contact details below). Information Commissioner's Office Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow SK9 5AF Tel: 0303 123 1113 www.ico.gov.uk



Information available from the Parish Council under the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) Model Publication Scheme

This publication scheme gives examples of the kinds of information that the Information Commissioners Office would expect Middleton St. George Parish Council to provide in order to meet its commitments under the Model Publication Scheme (Freedom of Information Act).

The ICO would expect Middleton St. George Parish Council to make the information in this definition document available unless:

- it does not hold the information.
- the information is exempt under one of the FOIA exemptions or Environmental Information Regulations exceptions, or its release is prohibited by another statute;
- the information is readily and publicly available from an external website; such information may have been provided by the public authority or on its behalf. The authority must provide a direct link to that information; the information is archived, out of date or otherwise inaccessible; or,
- it would be impractical or resource-intensive to prepare the material for routine release.

The guidance is not meant to give an exhaustive list of everything that should be covered by a publication scheme. The legal commitment is to the model publication scheme, and public authorities should look to provide as much information as possible on a routine basis.

Information to be published	How the information can be obtained	Cost
Class 1 - Who we are and what we do (Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts) This will be current information only. N.B. Councils should already be publishing as much information as possible about how they can be contacted. Who's who on the Council and its Committees	Information available on the Parish Council's website http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/ Further information can be obtained from the Clerk. Alan Macnab, 5, Whitebridge Drive, Whinfield Park, Darlington, DL1 3TY. Telephone: 01325 482015 Email: clerk@middleton-st-george.org.uk	Electronic Copies free of charge. Hard Copies charged at £0.10 per A4 copy

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Information to be published	How the information can be obtained	Cost
Contact details for Parish Clerk and Council members (named contacts where possible with telephone number and email address (if used)) Location of main Council office and accessibility details. Staffing structure		
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 as a minimum. Annual return form and report by auditor Finalised budget Precept Financial Standing Orders and Regulations Grants given and received List of current contracts awarded and value of contract	Information available on the Parish Council's website http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/ Further information can be obtained from the Clerk. Alan Macnab, 5, Whitebridge Drive, Whinfield Park, Darlington, DL1 3TY. Telephone: 01325 482015 Email: clerk@middleton-st-george.org.uk	Electronic Copies free of charge. Hard Copies charged at £0.10 per A4 copy
Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing (Strategies and plans, performance indicators, audits, inspections and reviews) Current and previous year as a minimum	Information available on the Parish Council's website http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/ Further information can be obtained from the Clerk. Alan Macnab, 5, Whitebridge Drive, Whinfield Park, Darlington, DL1 3TY. Telephone: 01325 482015 Email: clerk@middleton-st-george.org.uk	Electronic Copies free of charge. Hard Copies charged at £0.10 per A4 copy

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Information to be published	How the information can be obtained	Cost
Class 4 – How we make decisions (Decision making processes and records of decisions) Current and previous council year as a minimum Timetable of meetings (Council and any committee/sub-committee meetings and parish meetings) Agendas of meetings (as above) Minutes of meetings (as above) – n.b. this will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meeting. Reports presented to council meetings – n.b. this will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meeting Responses to consultation papers Responses to planning applications Bye-laws	Information available on the Parish Council's website http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/ Further information can be obtained from the Clerk. Alan Macnab, 5, Whitebridge Drive, Whinfield Park, Darlington, DL1 3TY. Telephone: 01325 482015 Email: clerk@middleton-st-george.org.uk	Electronic Copies free of charge. Hard Copies charged at £0.10 per A4 copy
Class 5 – Our policies and procedures (Current written protocols, policies and procedures for delivering our services and responsibilities) Current information only Policies and procedures for the conduct of council business: Procedural standing orders Committee and sub-committee terms of reference Delegated authority in respect of the Clerk	Information available on the Parish Council's website http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/ Further information can be obtained from the Clerk. Alan Macnab, 5, Whitebridge Drive, Whinfield Park, Darlington, DL1 3TY. Telephone: 01325 482015 Email: clerk@middleton-st-george.org.uk	Electronic Copies free of charge. Hard Copies charged at £0.10 per A4 copy

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Information to be published	How the information can be obtained	Cost
Code of Conduct Policy statements Policies and procedures for the provision of services and about the employment of staff: Internal instructions to staff and policies relating to the delivery of services Equality and diversity policy Health and safety policy Recruitment policies (including current vacancies) Policies and procedures for handling requests for information Complaints procedures (including those covering requests for information and operating the publication scheme) Information Security Policy. Records management policies (records retention, destruction and archive) Data protection policies Schedule of charges (for the publication of information)		
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) 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) Register of members' interests	Information available on the Parish Council's website http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/ Further information can be obtained from the Clerk. Alan Macnab, 5, Whitebridge Drive, Whinfield Park, Darlington, DL1 3TY. Telephone: 01325 482015 Email: clerk@middleton-st-george.org.uk Please be aware that some information may be available for inspection only.	Electronic Copies free of charge. Hard Copies charged at £0.10 per A4 copy

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Information to be published	How the information can be obtained	Cost
Register of gifts and hospitality		
Class 7 – The services we offer Allotments Bus Shelters Footpaths Highways – lighting, parking places, right to enter into discussions about new roads and road widening, consent of parish council required for diversion or discontinuation of highway, traffic signs and other notices, tree planting and verge maintenance Land – acquisition and sale of Litter – provision of litterbins and support for any anti-litter campaigns Planning – parish councils must be notified of, and display for residents, any planning applications for the area. Any comments submitted to the planning authority by the parish council must be taken into account Recreation – provision of recreation grounds, public walkways, play areas, open spaces, village greens, playing fields and boating ponds Rights of Way – footpath and bridleway maintenance Seats (public)	Information available on the Parish Council's website http://middleton-st-george.org.uk/ Further information can be obtained from the Clerk. Alan Macnab, 5, Whitebridge Drive, Whinfield Park, Darlington, DL1 3TY. Telephone: 01325 482015 Email: clerk@middleton-st-george.org.uk Please be aware that some information may be available for inspection only.	Electronic Copies free of charge. Hard Copies charged at £0.10 per A4 copy
Information to be published	How the information can be obtained	Cost
Signs – danger signs, place names and bus stops signs War Memorials		

Contact details:

Alan Macnab,
Clerk to the Parish Council,
Middleton St. George Parish Council,
5, Whitebridge Drive,
Whinfield Park,

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Darlington,
DL1 3TY.

Tel. 01325 482015
Email: clerk@middleton-st-george.org.uk

SCHEDULE OF CHARGES

This describes how the charges have been arrived at.

TYPE OF CHARGE	DESCRIPTION	BASIS OF CHARGE
Disbursement cost	Photocopying @ 10p per sheet (black & white)	Actual cost
	Postage	Actual cost of Royal Mail standard 2nd class

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