

# Frome Town Council Constitution

## Chapter 14 Access to Information Policy

Frome Town Hall  
Christchurch Street West  
Frome  
BA11 1EB

01373 465757  
[info@frometowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:info@frometowncouncil.gov.uk)

Last approved 4 July 2018  
Next review July 2019

A copy of this document is also available in different formats such as large print, Braille, audio or in a different language. Please contact the office if this is required.

## Table of Contents

1. Background.....	3
2. Scope .....	3
3. Accessing interpreters and translators .....	4
4. Accessible information: using plain language .....	4
5. Accessible information: keeping documents clear .....	5
6. Accessible information in alternative formats .....	6
Appendix 1: Useful information and guidance.....	7

## 1. Background

### 1.1. Information is a right

1.1.1. Every member of the public has a right to access our service.

1.1.2. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, places a duty on local authorities to publish race and disability equality schemes. This includes making our information accessible to everyone.

1.1.3. The Freedom of Information Act 2018 gives every member of the public a right to request information on any aspect of our work. This means that people have a right to Town Council information in a language or format that suits them, within reason.

### 1.2. How this will make a difference for the public

1.2.1. Our policy is committed to making information and services available:

- To individuals
- On request
- In alternative formats
- In alternative media

1.2.2. This applies to everything produced – website, letters, emails, leaflets, minutes, reports etc.

### 1.3. Accessibility and Council policies

1.3.1. The Council Constitution sets out for the public our key goals and our values as a local authority. Promoting ethnic integration and diversity in Frome is one of our key values and this policy helps make us accessible to all.

1.3.2. This policy is part of our approach to equality and diversity. For more information please read the Equality and Diversity chapter of the Staff Handbook

1.3.3. At Frome Town Council, we do not discriminate when people want to access information and services.

### 1.4. Commitment to accessibility

1.4.1. All our policies will include the following statement at the beginning:

*A copy of this document is also available in different formats such as large print, Braille, audio or in a different language. Please contact the office if this is required.*

1.4.2. They will also have our postal, email and website addresses and our telephone number on the front page

## 2. Scope

2.1. This policy provides guidelines to make sure the Town Council is accessible to everyone.

This includes:

- The public
- Staff
- Elected Cllrs
- Partner organisations

2.2. The policy has been written both for staff and elected Cllrs in the Council. The policy has also been written so members of the public can access it. Finally, the policy has been written for partner organisations, with the aim of developing future protocols on accessibility that would cut across organisations.

INFO ACCESS

- 2.3. This policy provides an overall framework for people to access us through:
  - Printed information
  - Electronic information
  - Face to face contact
  - Telephone
- 2.4. This policy covers all areas of access to information including:
  - Alternative formats
  - Translators
  - Interpreters
  - Other support for people at meetings
- 2.5. Our policy aims to make accessible services and information straightforward and part of the Council's day-to-day work.

### 3. Accessing interpreters and translators

- 3.1. This part focuses on making services accessible to people whose first language is not written or spoken English.
- 3.2. Access to interpreters
  - 3.2.1. Interpreters are needed where a person finds that communicating in English is a barrier to getting the information, advice or service they need.
  - 3.2.2. We have the following responsibilities regarding interpreters:
    - To provide them on request
    - To use them only with a person's consent
  - 3.2.3. Due to the low level of request for this service, the Council does not have direct access to interpreters, however if required, we will endeavour to respond within a reasonable timescale to find a suitable person who can provide an adequate level of interpretation
- 3.3. Access to translators
  - 3.3.1. At any point in time someone may want a document translated into a language other than English.
  - 3.3.2. The Council does not as a matter of course translate documents into other languages.
  - 3.3.3. However, if required, we hold details of translators for French, German and Polish and in the case of other languages, we will endeavour to respond within a reasonable time to find a suitable person who can provide an adequate level of translation.
  - 3.3.4. There are also several good websites that will provide electronic translation, but care must be taken as these translations are not always completely accurate.
- 3.4. Confidentiality
  - 3.4.1. Staff will ensure that both translators and interpreters sign a written undertaking that they will keep all information being translated or interpreted as confidential

### 4. Accessible information: using plain language

- 4.1. Plain language is about making sure that everything we write is clear to read.

- 4.2. The Plain English Campaign define plain English as ‘something that the intended audience can read, understand and act upon the first time they read it’.
- 4.3. The Plain English Campaign list what they consider plain language to be:
- Using short words that are commonly used
  - Using ‘you’ and ‘we’
  - Not being afraid to give instructions
  - Using positive language
  - Avoiding jargon
  - Explaining what acronyms stand for, such as Citizen’s Advice Bureau instead of CAB
  - Using words rather than abbreviations or symbols, for example ‘care of’, not c/o
  - Keeping sentences and paragraphs short (aim for maximum sentences of 15-20 words)
  - Using headings to break up writing
  - Explaining any technical terms you have to use
  - Avoiding long-winded sentences
  - Using the active voice ‘I will eat jelly’ rather than the passive voice ‘jelly will be eaten by me’
  - Choosing a photograph, diagram or illustration to replace long written descriptions
  - Only using basic punctuation: , ; : / ( )
  - Avoiding phrases such as inter alia and raison d’être, where an English equivalent can be used
- 4.4. You can find further information by visiting the Plain English website:  
[www.plainenglish.co.uk](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk)

## 5. Accessible information: keeping documents clear

- 5.1. Clear print is a design that takes into account a wider audience
- 5.2. Type size: we will always use font size 12 or above.
- 5.3. Type weight: medium or bold weight fonts are more accessible than light ones.
- 5.4. Typeface: the Council has agreed that Kefa II Pro for font in bold and Kefa II Pro Book for text.
- 5.5. Contrast: we aim for a clear colour contrast.
- 5.5.1. Black text on a white background and **strong blue text on a yellow background** provides the best contrast.
- 5.5.2. Inks which are of a darker tone of the same colour as the paper should be avoided.
- 5.5.3. People with colour blindness may have problems distinguishing **reds** or **greens**.
- 5.5.4. **When using white type, make sure the background is dark to provide good contrast.**
- 5.6. Using paper: we will avoid using glossy paper because the glare makes it difficult to read and will chose uncoated or matte paper.
- 5.6.1. Thin paper should not be used when printing documents on both sides.
- 5.6.2. If the text is showing through from the reverse side, then the paper is too thin, and remember that bold and large text is more likely to show through.
- 5.6.3. Alternatively choose paper with a minimum density of 90gsm for double sided printing.

- 5.7. Type styles: We will avoid sentences using CAPITAL LETTERS, *italics* or underlined text as these are generally harder to read. **Bold** is more accessible, but only in small amounts.
- 5.8. Page layout and word spacing: to make a document accessible:
- Keep the same space between each word.
  - Do not condense or s t r e t c h words.
  - Try not to write more than 60-70 letters per line.
  - Do not split words at the end of lines.
  - Align text to the left margin so it is easy to find the start and finish of each line.
  - Avoid justified text as it creates uneven spacing between words.
  - Break information down into sections with titles and sub titles.
- 5.9. Navigational aids: we will use numbered headings and paragraphs in long documents and use a contents list or index to guide readers to relevant sections and pages.
- 5.9.1. It is also helpful to place clear page numbers in the same position on each page and leaving a space between paragraphs makes reading easier.
- 5.10. Illustrations: where possible we will try not to write letters over pictures
- 5.11. Watermarks: these can be confusing to a reader, although it is a very useful tool especially for DRAFT or CONFIDENTIAL documents.
- 5.11.1. In addition, we will usually state DRAFT or CONFIDENTIAL in large bold print at the beginning of the document.
- 5.12. Large print: will be made available on request.
- 5.12.1. The RNIB defines large print as a minimum font size of point 16.
- 5.12.2. Action for Blind People recommend anything between point 16 to point 22.
- 5.12.3. We will ask people what size they would like, as no single size suits everyone.
- 5.12.4. With long documents it a good idea to ask the person whether they want all or part of a document made available in large print.

## 6. Accessible information in alternative formats

- 6.1. The Council has a responsibility to make materials in alternative formats available.
- 6.2. Electronic information: can be adapted or translated before being sent out. In some cases, readers will have adaptations to their computers, so all they will need is an email.
- 6.3. Coloured paper: can help some readers with dyslexia. It is important to ask the individual reader what is best for them.
- 6.4. Braille: some people prefer information in Braille.
- 6.4.1. Before responding to requests for information in Braille it is important to check that the person would rather have information in Braille than on CD.
- 6.4.2. The appendix gives details of organisations that can translate documents into Braille.
- 6.5. Translation: is a critical way to make documents accessible to people who read in other languages.
- 6.5.1. All requests for translation must be met in the language requested.
- 6.6. British Sign Language in video clips: when needed, we will pay for an interpreter to sign the document in front of a camcorder.
- 6.7. Using pictorial information: people may find information easier to understand if text is supported by illustrations. These could include:
- Photos

- Flow charts
  - Tables
  - Diagrams
- 6.7.1. Key points to remember when illustrating a printed text:
- Make sure the text is in plain language
  - Make sure the font is in a large size
- 6.7.2. MENCAP provide helpful information on how to make printed information accessible for people with learning disabilities and literacy difficulties.

## Appendix 1: Useful information and guidance

### Learning disabilities

- MENCAP: [www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

### Visual impairments/blindness:

- Royal National Institute of the Blind: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)
- Somerset Association for the Blind: [info@somersetblind.org.uk](mailto:info@somersetblind.org.uk) / 01823 333 818
- Somerset Sight: [www.somersetsight.org.uk](http://www.somersetsight.org.uk) / 01823 333 818

### Hearing impairments/deafness:

- Royal National Institute for the Deaf: [www.rnid.org.uk](http://www.rnid.org.uk)

### Other:

- Plain English Campaign: [www.plainenglish.co.uk](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk)
- E-Com Communications: [www.e-communications.co.uk](http://www.e-communications.co.uk) / 01825 765 999
- Frome Citizens Advice Bureau: [www.mendipcab.org.uk](http://www.mendipcab.org.uk) / 01373 465 496
- Somerset Total Communication: [stc@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:stc@somerset.gov.uk) / 01278 444949