

Sleaford Town Council

CONSTITUTION Chapter 14 Accessibility Policy



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ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION POLICY AND GUIDANCE

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ACCESSIBILITY POLICY AND GUIDANCE

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy provides - guidelines to make sure that the Town Council is accessible to everyone. This includes:

- a. The Public**
- b. Staff**
- c. Elected Members**
- d. Partner Organisations**

The policy has been written both for staff and elected Members at Sleaford Town 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.

This policy provides an overall framework for people to access us through:

- a. Printed information**
- b. Electronic information**
- c. Face to face contact**
- d. Telephone**

It will cover all areas of access to information including:

- e. Alternative formats**
- f. Other support for people at meetings**

The Town Council's policy aims to make accessible services and information:

- g. Straightforward**
- h. Part of the Council's day to day work**

Information is a right - Every member of the public has a right to access our service. The Race Relations [Amendment] Act 2000, and the, Equality Act 2010 places a duty on local authorities to publish race and disability equality schemes. This includes making our information accessible to everyone.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives every member of the public a right to request information on any aspect of our work. This means that, within reason, people have a right to Council information in a format that suits them.

Our policy is committed to making information and services available:

- To individuals
- On request
- In formats that improve accessibility to the Councils information

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

2. ACCESSIBILITY AND COUNCIL POLICIES

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

The accessibility policy is part of our approach to equality and diversity.

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

Access to interpreters - 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. ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION - USING PLAIN LANGUAGE

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

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’.

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.

You can find further information by visiting the Plain English website - www.plainenglish.co.uk

4. ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION - KEEPING DOCUMENTS CLEAR

Sleaford Town Council will ensure that documents are accessible by utilising the following:

- a. **Type face** - The Royal National Institute for the Blind [RNIB] and Action for Blind People recommend font size 14 point as a minimum. Medium or bold weight fonts are more accessible than light ones. The Council has agreed that Calibri minimum font size 12 will be used for day to day use. Simulated handwriting and elaborate typefaces are difficult to read and should not be used.
- b. **Contrast** - Aim for a clear colour contrast. Black text on a white background and **strong blue text on a yellow background** provides the best contrast. Inks which are of a darker tone of the same colour as the paper should be avoided. People with colour blindness may have problems distinguishing reds or greens. **When using white type, make sure the background is dark to provide good contrast.**
- c. **Paper** - Avoid using glossy paper because the glare makes it difficult to read and choose uncoated paper or matt. Thin paper should not be used when printing documents on both sides. 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. Alternatively choose paper with a minimum density of 90gsm for double sided printing.
- d. **Type styles** - 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.
- e. **Page layout and word spacing** - To make a document accessible :
 - Keep the same space between each word.
 - Do not condense or stretch 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.
- f. **Navigational aids** - It is good practice to use numbered headings and paragraphs in long documents and to use a contents list or index to guide readers to relevant sections and pages. 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.
- g. **Watermarks** - Watermarks can be confusing to a reader, although it is a very useful tool especially for DRAFT or CONFIDENTIAL documents. An alternate option is to state DRAFT or CONFIDENTIAL in large bold print at the beginning of the document and on the top of each page.
- h. **Large print** - Large print documents must be made available on request. The RNIB defines large print as a minimum font size of Point 16. Action for Blind People recommend anything between Point 16 to Point 22. It is good practice to ask people what size they would like, as no single size suits everyone. 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. In some cases they may only want a summary.

APPENDIX : USEFUL INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

Sleaford Town Council:
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Tel: 01529 303456
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Learning disabilities: Mencap
www.mencap.org.uk

Visual impairments/blindness: Royal National Institute of the Blind www.rnib.org.uk

Hearing impairments/deafness: Royal National Institute for the Deaf www.rnid.org.uk

Plain English Campaign www.plainenglish.co.uk

E-Com Communications
[can transcribe documents into Braille, audio, easy-read or large print etc]
www.e-comcommunications.co.uk