

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 2 September 2019

Public Authority: London Borough of Waltham Forest
Address: Town Hall
Forest Road
London
E17 4JF

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested information concerning the income received in rent and service charges from homes and businesses in the Wood Street area, and the expenditure on repairs and maintenance for the Marlowe Road estate for the period 2010 to 2016.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that the London Borough of Waltham Forest ("the Council") failed to respond to the request within 20 working days and has therefore breached section 10 of the FOIA.
3. The Commissioner requires the Council to take the following steps to ensure compliance with the legislation.
 - Issue a substantive response, under the FOIA, to the request.
4. The Council must take these steps within 35 calendar days of the date of this decision notice. Failure to comply may result in the Commissioner making written certification of this fact to the High Court pursuant to section 54 of the FOIA and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

Request and response

5. On 14 June 2019, the complainant wrote to the Council and requested information in the following terms:

"Dear London Borough of Waltham Forest,

I am writing to make an open government request for all the information to which I am entitled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Please provide me with the following:-

1) The income received in rent and service charges from homes and businesses in the Wood Street area (including the Marlowe Road Estate)

2) The expenditure on repairs and maintenance for the Marlowe Road Estate for the period 2010 - 2016.

*I would like the above information to be provided to me in paper format and sent to the following address as per below:-
[Complainant's address]."*

6. The Council acknowledged the request on 15 July 2019 but had failed to provide a substantive response by the date of this notice.

Scope of the case

7. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 23 July 2019 to complain about the failure, by the Council, to respond to the request.
8. In line with her usual practice, the Commissioner contacted the Council on 14 August 2019 to highlight the outstanding response. She requested that the Council respond to the request within 10 working days. Her correspondence was neither acknowledged nor responded to.
9. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 15 August 2019 to request a decision notice considering the Council's compliance with the FOIA.
10. As of the date of this notice, the Commissioner had received no correspondence from the Council to confirm that a response had been issued to the complainant. The Commissioner has been unable to contact the Council's Freedom of Information team by phone to discuss this matter.

11. The scope of this notice and the following analysis is to consider whether the Council has complied with section 10 of the FOIA.

Reasons for decision

12. Section 1(1) of the FOIA states that:

Any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled –

- (a) to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request, and*
- (b) if that is the case, to have that information communicated to him.*

13. Section 8(1) of the FOIA states:

In this Act any reference to a "request for information" is a reference to such a request which –

- (a) is in writing,*
- (b) states the name of the applicant and an address for correspondence, and*
- (c) describes the information requested.*

14. The Commissioner considers that the request in question fulfilled these criteria and therefore constituted a valid request for recorded information under the FOIA.

15. Section 10 of the FOIA states that responses to requests made under the Act must be provided "*promptly and in any event not later than the twentieth working day following the date of receipt.*"

16. From the evidence presented to the Commissioner in this case, it is clear that, in failing to issue a response to the request within 20 working days, the Council has breached section 10 of the FOIA.

Right of appeal

17. Either party has the right to appeal against this decision notice to the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights). Information about the appeals process may be obtained from:

First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights)
GRC & GRP Tribunals,
PO Box 9300,
LEICESTER,
LE1 8DJ

Tel: 0300 1234504

Fax: 0870 739 5836

Email: grc@justice.gov.uk

Website: www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/general-regulatory-chamber

18. If you wish to appeal against a decision notice, you can obtain information on how to appeal along with the relevant forms from the Information Tribunal website.
19. Any Notice of Appeal should be served on the Tribunal within 28 (calendar) days of the date on which this decision notice is sent.

Signed

Ben Tomes
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