

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 15 January 2025

Public Authority: HM Treasury

Address: 1 Horseguards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

1. Request:

The complainant requested the following information from HM Treasury on 21 October 2024:

'1) Please provide a copy of all departmental email correspondence between (to and from) Rachel Reeves (including her private office joint account) and the following companies from July 4th to the date of this request.

- Commercial Estates Group
- FGS
- Arden Strategies
- Foreign Investors for Britain

If there are any attachments to these emails, please use the following approach to disclosure.

If they are electronic letters to Reeves attached to the email, for example, where an email is simply a covering note for the letter, please disclose the letters.

If any other attachments are included with an email, such as reports, submissions or spreadsheets, please do not provide the attachment, just provide a list of the titles of the attachments with your response.

2) Please provide a list of any meetings between Rachel Reeves (including her private office) and the following companies from July 4th to the date of this request.

- Commercial Estates Group
- FGS
- Arden Strategies
- Foreign Investors for Britain

Please provide the attendance list for these meetings, whether a briefing was prepared for Reeves ahead of the meeting by civil service, and a list of the titles of the documents prepared for the meeting or provided by the third parties for use at the meeting.

Even where companies are acting on behalf of a client, so long as their staff attend the meetings, that would still constitute a meeting with them as well.

3) Please state if any other minister of the department has been contacted by the following companies from July 4th to the date of this request.

- Commercial Estates Group
- FGS
- Arden Strategies
- Foreign Investors for Britain

Please limit this search to the minister's inbox, and their general private office inbox.'

2. Commissioner's Decision:

Section 10(1) of FOIA states that a public authority must respond to a request within 20 working days. Section 17(3) of FOIA states that where a public authority is relying on a qualified exemption, it can have a "reasonable" extension of time to consider the public interest in maintaining the exemption or disclosing the information.

The section 45 Code of Practice states that usually this should be no more than a further 20 working days.¹ This means that the total time spent responding to a request should not exceed 40 working days unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Commissioner does not consider there to be any exceptional circumstances and finds that, by failing to respond to the request within a reasonable time frame, the public authority has breached section 17(3) of FOIA.

3. Steps:

The public authority must provide a substantive response to the request in accordance with its obligations under FOIA.

The public authority must take this step within 30 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 FOIA and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

4. Right of Appeal:

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: 0203 936 8963

Fax: 0870 739 5836

Email: grc@justice.gov.uk

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/744071/CoP_FOI_Code_of_Practice_-_Minor_Amendments_20180926_.pdf

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

Any Notice of Appeal should be served on the Tribunal within 28 (calendar) days of the date on which this decision notice is sent.

**Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF**