

## Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

### Decision notice

**Date:** 10 December 2020

**Public Authority:** London Borough of Hackney  
**Address:** 1 Hillman Street  
London  
E8 1DY

#### Decision (including any steps ordered)

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1. The complainant requested information from the London Borough of Hackney (the Council) regarding the internal and external costs incurred as a result of the Council pursuing planning enforcement action against the display of an art installation in Columbia Wharf.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that 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

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5. On 23 October 2020, the complainant wrote to the Council and requested information in the following terms:

*"The voters of Hackney are entitled to know of your hand in these events. They are also entitled to know how much of their money you have chosen to commit to pursuing them so please provide detail of these costs to date, including internal Council costs and those payable to outside legal advisers. Notably I have not received a costs schedule or budget as would be normal if the Council was expecting to recover any costs in legal proceedings. If you are inclined to adopt your default position of secrecy in this respect you should take this email as a formal FOIA request."*

6. The Council had failed to provide a substantive response by the date of this notice.

## Scope of the case

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7. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 25 November 2020 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 25 November 2020 to highlight the outstanding response. She requested that the Council respond to the request within 10 working days.
9. 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

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10. 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.*

11. 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.*
12. The Commissioner considers that the request in question fulfilled these criteria and therefore constituted a valid request for recorded information under the FOIA.
13. 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."*
14. 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

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15. 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](mailto:grc@justice.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/general-regulatory-chamber](http://www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/general-regulatory-chamber)

16. 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.
17. 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**  
**Team Manager**  
**Information Commissioner's Office**  
**Wycliffe House**  
**Water Lane**  
**Wilmslow**  
**Cheshire**  
**SK9 5AF**