

## **Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)**

### **Decision notice**

**Date:** 27 July 2021

**Public Authority:** Cabinet Office  
**Address:** 70 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2AS

#### **Decision (including any steps ordered)**

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1. The complainant requested information from the Cabinet Office about specified correspondence. By the date of this notice the Cabinet Office had not issued a substantive response to this request.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that the Cabinet Office has breached section 10(1) of the FOIA in that it failed to provide a valid response to the request within the statutory time frame of 20 working days.
3. The Commissioner requires the Cabinet Office to take the following step to ensure compliance with the legislation.
  - The Cabinet Office must provide a substantive response to the request in accordance with its obligations under the FOIA.
4. The Cabinet Office must take this step 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 Act and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

## Request and response

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5. On 19 March 2021, the complainant wrote to the Cabinet Office and requested information in the following terms:

*"I would like to make an FOI request.*

*From July 2020 to the day this request is processed, please provide all correspondence and communications between the Prime Minister and any one or more of the following:*

- (i) Lord Brownlow*
- (ii) Simon Case*
- (iii) Mike Chattey (Conservative Party Chief Executive)*
- (iv) Ben Elliot (Conservative Party Co-Chairman)*
- (v) Helen MacNamara (former Cabinet Office Director General)*

*Which refers to, or relates to, the refurbishment of the flat above 11 Downing Street. By "correspondence and communications", I define this as including, but not limited to: • Emails (and their attachments) • Press inquiries and responses • Letters • Notes taken during telephone conversations • Briefings • Memos • Reports • Newspaper clippings*

*I am happy for you to conduct an electronic search only."*

6. The Cabinet Office acknowledged the request on 22 March 2021. To date, a substantive response to the request has not been issued.

## Scope of the case

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7. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 22 April 2021 to complain about the Cabinet Office's failure to respond to their request.
8. The Commissioner has considered whether the Cabinet Office has complied with its obligations in relation to the time for compliance at section 10(1) of the FOIA.

## Reasons for decision

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9. 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."*

10. Section 10(1) of the FOIA states that a public authority must respond to a request promptly and *"not later than the twentieth working day following the date of receipt"*.
11. On 17 May 2021 the Commissioner wrote to the Cabinet Office, reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to the complainant's request within 10 working days.
12. Despite this intervention the Cabinet Office has failed to respond to the complainant.
13. From the evidence provided to the Commissioner in this case, it is clear that the Cabinet Office did not deal with the request for information in accordance with the FOIA. The Commissioner finds that the Cabinet Office has breached section 10(1) by failing to respond to the request within 20 working days and it is now required to respond to the request in accordance with the FOIA.

## Right of appeal

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14. 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](mailto:grc@justice.gov.uk)

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

15. 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.
16. 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 .....**

**Susan Duffy**  
**Senior Case Officer**  
**Information Commissioner's Office**  
**Wycliffe House**  
**Water Lane**  
**Wilmslow**  
**Cheshire**  
**SK9 5AF**