

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 2 August 2022

Public Authority: London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council

Address: Barking Town Hall
Town Hall Square
Barking
IG11 7LU

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested information about specified properties. By the date of this notice the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council ("the Council") had not issued a substantive response to this request.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that the Council has breached section 10(1) of 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 Council to take the following step to ensure compliance with the legislation.
 - The Council must provide a substantive response to the request in accordance with its obligations under FOIA.
4. The Council 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 FOIA and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

Request and response

5. On 11 January 2022, the complainant wrote to BeFirst, who are a company that is wholly owned by the Council and requested information in the following terms:

"Please accept this email as a request under the freedom of information act :

First request :

Please could you give me the details for offers made and accepted for properties belonging to leaseholders in the Gascoigne estate barking for 2 bedrooms and 3 bedrooms houses under the regeneration programme. Specific address do not need to be provided , but a dates would be useful. (For example this is information usually sought for sold properties available through the land registry)

For example.

1. 2 bedroom property at Rockwood house, leaseholder in Jan 2020 bought back by council for £260,000.

Second request .

Please provide the value of compensations offered for each of the above."

6. On 11 January 2022, BeFirst acknowledged the complainant's request and advised that it had been forwarded to the Council as the relevant authority to answer the request.
7. On 27 May 2022, the Council contacted the complainant directly, asking if they had received a response to the information request in which the complainant responded on the same day advising that they had not. To date, a substantive response has not been issued.

Scope of the case

8. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 9 June 2022 to complain about the Council's failure to respond to their request.

9. The Commissioner has considered whether the Council has complied with its obligations in relation to the time for compliance at section 10(1) of FOIA.

Reasons for decision

10. Section 1(1) of 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 10(1) of 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”.
12. On 20 June 2022, the Commissioner wrote to the Council, reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to the complainant’s request within 10 working days.
13. Despite this intervention the Council has failed to respond to the complainant.
14. From the evidence provided to the Commissioner in this case, it is clear that the Council did not deal with the request for information in accordance with FOIA. The Commissioner finds that the Council 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 FOIA.

Right of appeal

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: 0203 936 8963

Fax: 0870 739 5836

Email: grc@justice.gov.uk

Website: 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

Michael Lea
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