



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000



City of London Fees Guidance

Introduction

Our Fees Guidance is our guide as to what fees we charge for responding to a Request for Information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The Guidance complies with the Government's Fees Regulations (Statutory Instrument 2004, No 3244) issued under the Act.

Costs of Preparation

In responding to a request for information, we are allowed to take into account the estimated costs of preparation. These consist of the estimated expenditure on:

- Determining whether we hold the information requested by you.
- Locating and retrieving the information.
- Extracting the information from a document containing it (including the first time an individual working in the authority reads information for this purpose, but any subsequent reading, or if the information is passed to others to read, is not included), and including the time taken to summarise information, or to edit information, eg if the information needs to be separated from information which has not been requested.

We cannot charge the costs of preparation if we estimate that they will be under £450 (excluding VAT, where this is chargeable). In the Act this amount is referred to as the **'appropriate limit'**.

In estimating the costs of preparation, we are allowed to take into account staff costs at the rate of £25 per person per hour. In other words, the Government considers that £450 is equivalent to about 2.5 days of one person's time. However, we are not allowed to include the estimated cost of staff time taken in deciding whether any exemptions apply to the disclosure of information.

If we estimate that the £450 limit for the costs of preparation would be exceeded by complying with your request for information, then: (a) we are not obliged to communicate the information; and (b) if we do communicate it, we are allowed to charge the costs in full. If we decided not to comply with the request, we would also ask you if you would like to reframe your request so that it did not exceed the limit. If you did not wish to reframe your request, we would normally either refuse to comply with the request or charge you the costs in full.

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If we do comply with a request (in communicating the information itself) which we estimate exceeds the appropriate limit, we do not have to do so within the terms of the Act, eg we do not have to comply within the 20 working days response time. But we would normally try to do so.

Duty to confirm or deny whether we hold the information

If we refuse to comply with your request because we estimate that the £450 limit for the costs of preparation would be exceeded, we must nevertheless confirm or deny whether we hold the information you have requested, so long as an exemption to this does not apply, and so long as the estimated cost of complying with this alone would not exceed £450.

Costs of Disbursement

We are allowed to charge in full for what are called the 'disbursement' costs. These are separate costs to the costs of preparation. The disbursement costs are the costs of:

- Informing you that information is or is not held.
- Communicating the information to you.

They cover the cost of the medium of communication, eg of the paper on which we write to tell you we do not hold the information; or, if we do hold the information, of printing out or photocopying the information, or transferring the information to whatever format is requested, and of sending it to you. Our charges (excluding postage and packing) for various ways of communicating the information to you are:

Copying or Printing out (black & white)

A4 sheet 5p

A3 sheet 10p

Larger sizes depend on costs charged to the City

Copying or Printing out (colour)

A4 30p

A3 50p

Larger sizes depend on costs charged to the City

CDs (if the information is already held electronically)

10p per CD.

Microfiche / Microfilm

10p per frame.

Converting to electronic format

Depends on costs charged to the City.

Converting to microfiche or microfilm

Depends on costs charged to the City.

It is our policy to start charging disbursement costs only when they reach £10 or over.

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We are not allowed to include the cost of staff time in our estimate of disbursement costs, unless the costs of preparation exceed £450. Also, with regard to any preference you express as to the format (eg electronic or paper) in which you would like to receive information, we must comply “so far as this is reasonably practical”. However, if the staff costs involved are too high, we can either refuse to communicate the information in your preferred format or include the staff costs in our charge.

Where we are required by other legislation to provide information in a particular form or language at no additional cost, for example on audio tape to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, we would accordingly make no charge for providing the information in this way.

VAT

The Government’s rules with regard to the charging of VAT are as follows:

- If we are asked for information, and the information is only available from us or another public authority, any fees charged will not attract VAT.
- If we are asked for information that is available from another source, any fees will attract VAT.

Please note, too, that the fee charged for any information that is provided in accordance with our Publication Scheme is also subject to VAT.

Payment

If we consider that a charge is appropriate, we will notify you in a **Fees Notice**. In most circumstances we are required to comply with your request for information within 20 working days. However, the time which passes from the day we issue a Fees Notice to the day we receive your payment is not counted towards the 20 working days. The remaining number of working days in which to fulfil your request is therefore calculated from the first working day after we receive your payment. If after three calendar months we have not received payment from you, then your request lapses.

Repeated requests or requests in pursuance of a campaign

Where two or more requests for information, relating to any extent to the same or similar information, are made by one person or by different persons who appear to be acting in concert or in pursuance of a campaign, and the requests are received within any period of 60 working days, the estimated cost in complying with any one of the requests can be taken to be the estimated total cost of complying with all of them. However, if the estimated aggregated total cost of preparation for all the enquiries exceeds the £450 limit, and we decide nevertheless to respond to all the requests, we are not permitted to charge the aggregate cost when responding to each of the requests.

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Vexatious requests for information

We are not obliged to respond to vexatious requests for information. Vexatious requests are requests which cause disproportionate inconvenience or expense to our work.

Review of costs

We reserve the right to keep under review our rates of calculating our costs where the Fees Regulations allow and where the information requested lies outside the scope of the Act. We will endeavour to keep our costs reasonable, in order to assist public access to information in accordance with the spirit of the Act.

City of London information outside the scope of the Act

The City of London's activities are funded partly through public resources - the City Fund - and partly through income from private and trust funds - City's Cash and Bridge House Estates. For further information, please visit our webpage about Finance and the City of London:

http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/corporation/LGNL_Services/Council_and_democracy/Council_budgets_and_spending/index.htm.

Information about the activities funded through our income from private and trust funds is outside the scope of the Act and disclosure is at our discretion except where otherwise required by law.

City of London
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