

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 22 September 2023

Public Authority: London Borough of Waltham Forest
Address: Waltham Forest Town Hall
Forest Road
Walthamstow
E17 4JF

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested information from the London Borough of Waltham Forest (the public authority). By the date of this notice the public authority had not issued a substantive response to this request.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that the public authority 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 public authority to take the following step to ensure compliance with the legislation.
 - The public authority must provide a substantive response to the request in accordance with its obligations under FOIA.
4. The public authority 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 2 May 2023, the complainant wrote to the public authority and requested information in the following terms:

"I refer to an e-mail from [NAME REDACTED], Neighbourhoods on the 24th April 2023 in which it was states, with regarding to my complaints about, amongst other things rat/vermin infestations that:

"We have seen evidence which suggest that waste is being deposited at Fairwood Court by people who do not live in the area and thereby causing the bins to overflow with excess waste in the communal area. We have carried out numerous investigations which have led to fines being issued to the perpetrators."

FOI request

(A) Please provide me with information pertaining to the following:

1. The number of fines which have been issued in the last five colander years (5) (March 2018 to March 2023) pertaining to Fairwood Court
2. The nature of these fines i.e. Whether or not they are specific to vermin infestation or under which specific health act
3. Please specify the date of these fines (and where possible the addresses) and how much the fines incurred.

(B) The email from [NAME REDACTED], also refers to "numerous investigations." Please can you provide me with the following pertaining to the email response from [NAME REDACTED],

1. The number of specific investigations which have been carried out in the last five (5) calendar years (March 2018 to March 2023)
2. Please can you confirm if there are records of these investigations i.e., in terms of reports or pro forma which are used.
3. Please confirm the status of the officers who had carried out these investigations either by name or designated position in the management structure of the London Borough of Waltham Forest."
(sic)

Reasons for decision

6. 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.”

7. 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”.

8. On 1 September 2023 the Commissioner wrote to the public authority, reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to the complainant’s request within 10 working days.

9. Despite this intervention the public authority has failed to respond to the complainant.

10. From the evidence provided to the Commissioner in this case, it is clear that the public authority did not deal with the request for information in accordance with FOIA. The Commissioner finds that the public authority 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. To the extent that any information in scope is environmental in nature, the public authority should respond in accordance with the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

Right of appeal

11. 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

12. 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.
13. 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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Cheshire
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