

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 26 April 2019

Public Authority: Winsford Town Council
Address: Wyvern House
The Drumber
Winsford
Cheshire
CW7 1AH

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested information from Winsford Town Council about use by members of an assortment of different email addresses as their official council point of contact.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that Winsford Town Council 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 Winsford Town Council to take the following steps to ensure compliance with the legislation.
 - Respond to the complainant's request in accordance with the FOIA
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 Act and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

Request and response

5. On 27 January 2019, the complainant wrote to Winsford Town Council and requested information in the following terms:

"Having noted the use by members of an assortment of different email addresses as their official council point of contact, kindly confirm reason why the members are not uniformly using the councils generic email address."

6. To date, a substantive response has not been issued.

Scope of the case

7. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 14 March 2019 to complain about the failure by Winsford Town Council to respond to his request.
8. The Commissioner has considered whether Winsford Town Council has complied with its obligations in relation to the time for compliance at section 10 (1) of the FOIA.

Reasons for decision

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 2 April 2019 the Commissioner wrote to Winsford Town Council, reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to the complainant within 10 working days.
12. Despite this intervention Winsford Town Council has failed to respond to the complainant.

13. From the evidence provided to the Commissioner in this case, it is clear that Winsford Town Council did not deal with the request for information in accordance with the FOIA. The Commissioner finds that Winsford Town 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 the FOIA.

Right of appeal

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: 0300 1234504

Fax: 0870 739 5836

Email: GRC@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Website: 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

Ben Tomes
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Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF