



Department for Culture, Media & Sport

Freedom of Information Team
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Russell Scott
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IR2024/00605

15 March 2024

Dear Russell Scott,

Thank you for your correspondence of 24 January, in which you requested an internal review of the department's response to your request for information on 20 November. Your previous request was for the following information:

On the 23/05/23 Minister Stuart Andrew held a meeting with Manchester City FC to discuss "To discuss the Football Governance White Paper"

My request:

1 - Please confirm if you hold a copy of meeting minutes for the meeting referenced above?

2 -if the answer to question 1 is yes, please provide a copy of the minutes.

3 - please also provide a copy of the attendance list, agenda and any ministerial briefings provided to the minister for this meeting.

4 - please provide a copy of any emails between the ministers office and representatives of Man City leading up to the meeting. (Please use a date range of 01/05/23 to the 23/05/23 for you search for relevant emails).

The department responded on 17 January 2024 (our reference FOI2023/11267). You have now requested an internal review, as follows:

Please pass this on to the person who conducts Freedom of Information reviews.

I am writing to request an internal review of Department for Culture, Media and Sport's handling of my FOI request 'Ministers meeting with Man City'.

Please review your decision to withhold the meeting minutes. This is a subject which is clearly in the public interest. Since DCMS provided a response to my request two national papers have reported on the decision to withhold the minutes and my social media post sharing the DCMS FOI response has now been viewed 2.5 million times in less than 1 week. This is a clear demonstration of the public interest.



Furthermore, i reject the decision to withhold the minutes in there entirety - surely any commercially sensitive information can be redacted - for example..

Lastly, please can you answer the following additional questions:

1 - Where was the meeting held. please confirm the location.

2 - The department has confirmed no emails are held between the parties in the 3 weeks leading upto the meeting, if this is the case please can you confirm how the meeting was organised? i.e via text message, whatsapp message, telephone call, etc..

3 - A recent government spokesperson confirmed to the press that Man City's premier league charges were not discussed, please therefore can you provide an agenda for the meeting or a summary of what topics were discussed?

I appreciate that the 3 questions above may be considered as a separate request independent of the internal review request.

In order to ensure cases are looked at afresh, internal reviews of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests are carried out in our department by officials unconnected to the handling of the original request. I was therefore asked to conduct the internal review and I present my findings below.

I reviewed the information in scope of Questions 2 and 3 of your request, and I can confirm that the department was warranted to exempt this information under sections 36(2)(b)(i) and 36(2)(b)(ii), as I believe it would be likely to, inhibit (i)the free and frank provision of advice and (ii)the free and frank exchange of views for the purpose of deliberation'. Conducting my own public interest test, I would still be in favour of exempting the information from disclosure, with the main deciding factor being protecting the 'safe space' around Ministers and officials. The discussion and related correspondence involved a free and frank discussion between HMG and Manchester City - the release of such information could inhibit the communication in the future, as the conversation was in confidence. The release of such information would create relationship issues between the Premier League Exec and Manchester City FC as this was a private conversation, outside of the Premier League.

Regarding Q3 of your request I note that some personal information was also withheld under section 40(2) and I agree with this course of action as the personal information relates to junior staff.

I can see that the Freedom of Information officer followed the ICO guidance, and all information that DCMS holds in scope was given permission to be exempt under Section 36 by a Minister of the Crown.

With regards to your further questions please see response below:

1. The meeting was held at DCMS, 100 Parliament Street, London.
2. Whilst this falls outside the timeframe of the request, we can confirm it was set up by email.
3. We do not hold an agenda for the meeting.

For the reasons stated above, I uphold the department's decision to withhold information under sections 36(2)(b)(i), 36(2)(b)(ii) and 40(2) of the Act.

Yours sincerely,

Freedom of Information Team
Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Complaints and comments

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner's Office have a complaints form which you can utilise to make a complaint. This can be found here: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/official-information-concerns-report/official-information-concern/>