

FOI 16277

For the last 3 taxpayers years, please could you provide me with the following information in print on paper not via email

- 1 - every employee's name, title / position /department that works for Wigan and leigh council.
- 2 - every employee's wage / salary and bonus that works for Wigan and leigh council
- 3 - every employee's expenses account or credit card they use for expense or anything they have used tax payers money to buy / purchase while in a position at the council
- 4 - all funding or transactions any council employees have made using tax payers money for events or promoting themselves
- 5 - all the travel and meal expenses of every Wigan and leigh council member
- 6 - all accounts of tax payer's money being spent on schemes or camera systems for the town or what they have funded for private individuals

Please can you make all 6 points on one person at a time in your reply please do not try to spread the information out every where I want all 6 points for each employee separate so a list of each employee

- 7 - please provide each departments from Wigan and leigh council spending and budget
And who as a council member or board authorised it

The Council confirms that it holds the information requested but under section 14(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act) is not obliged to comply with the request as it has deemed the request vexatious.

Vexatious is not defined in the Act but the Information Commissioner has advised that the "key question you must ask yourself is whether the request is likely to cause a disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption, irritation or distress."

It is our view that the request will cause a disproportionate level of disruption. The reasons for this are as follows:

The request is extremely broad in scope asking for detailed information about each Council employee (around 5000) for each of the past three years. For six separate questions that amounts to $3 \times 5000 \times 6 = 90000$ items. The request specifies that the response should be on paper not via email which would add considerably to the time and cost required to comply. Whilst the information is held, it would take a disproportionate amount of time to extract the information from various databases and would impose an unreasonable burden on the local authority in terms of staff time and cost.

For example, to run the reports just for questions 1 and 2, HR would need to run two separate reports for each year and then a report to pick up leavers during the year as the report would initially only pick up the position on a specified date. That would take approximately six hours even before converting the report to a printable format. The information for questions 3, 4, 5 is not held in the way requested and over 100,000 transactions would need to be reviewed to identify the information requested. Again, converting to a printable format would require more time.

Whilst a request for information under the Act does not need to specify a reason for the request and, indeed, the Council normally treats requests without reference to the motive or purpose behind the request, when considering whether a request is vexatious, the value or serious purpose of the request can be considered. The Council of course recognises that the use of public money to pay its staff a salary and any work-related expenses is a matter of public interest and the use of public money on general expenditure should also be accountable and transparent. However, the value of breaking that down by individual members of staff is less obvious and in fact the Council can see no such purpose or value in the public interest. It is also worth noting that disclosing such information on individual members of staff would be likely to breach the data protection principles and therefore be exempt under section 40(2) of the Act. Whilst the information could be redacted, it would again be an unreasonable and disproportionate burden to undertake this exercise for 90000 items of information.

The Council is obliged under section 16 of the Act to provide advice and assistance to anyone submitting a request.

The Council would consider a request for some or all of the information at a Council level, i.e. not broken down by employee. Indeed some of the information would already be in the public domain. I wish however to make you aware that the Council cannot guarantee at this stage that it would be able to provide the information, in the revised format set out at the beginning of this paragraph, if to produce the information would take the equivalent of 18 hours of staff time. This is because if the supplying of information takes longer than 18 hours, another exemption within the Act - section 12 - would apply and the Council would not be obliged to comply with the request.

If you wish to proceed with a revised request along these lines, please submit a revised request and the Council will consider that accordingly.

However, the request as currently stated is considered - in all the circumstances - to be vexatious in the sense of being a disproportionate and inappropriate use of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the exemption under section 14(1) of the Act is therefore engaged.