

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 4 December 2018

Public Authority: Lancashire County Council
Address: PO Box 78
County Hall
Preston
Lancashire
PR1 8XJ

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested correspondence between Lancashire County Council (the Council) and IKEA regarding a strategic development site.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that the 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 the Council to take the following step to ensure compliance with the legislation.
 - The Council must issue a substantive response to the request in accordance with its obligations under the FOIA.
4. The Council 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 the Act and may be dealt with as a contempt of court.

Request and response

5. On 23 May 2018, the complainant wrote to the Council and requested information in the following terms:

"Please supply correspondence between Lancashire County Council and IKEA specifically concerning the Cuerden Strategic site in South Ribble

From between the dates of:

1st May 2018

And

22nd May 2018"

6. The Council acknowledged the request on 24 May 2018. On 21 June 2018 it contacted the complainant again to confirm it was unable to provide a response within the statutory deadline and apologised for the delay.
7. The complainant wrote to the Council on 28 June 2018 to ask for an update regarding his request. The Council responded on 3 July 2018 and apologised again for the delay.

Scope of the case

8. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 20 July 2018 to complain about the Council's failure to respond to his information request.
9. On 14 August 2018 the Commissioner wrote to the Council, reminding it of its responsibilities and asking it to provide a substantive response to the complainant within 10 working days.
10. Despite this intervention the Council has failed to respond to the complainant.

Reasons for decision

11. 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."*
- 12. 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."*
- 13. From the evidence provided to the Commissioner in this case, it is clear that the Council did not deal with the request for information in accordance with the FOIA. The Commissioner finds that the 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
Team Manager
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF