

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

Response to Request for Information

Reference FOI 001611
Date 24 October 2017

Spending on Advertisements, Promoting Posts etc

Request:

1. Excluding statutory advertisements that have to be placed by law, how much money did the council spend on advertising in each of the last three financial years? Also how much has been spent this financial year so far.

In response to your above question, following careful consideration the Council regrets to inform you that it has decided not to disclose this information.

The information you have requested has been withheld from disclosure. The exemption engaged is Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI).

Section 12 of the FOI exempts Public Authorities from providing information where the estimated cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit. Any estimate must be undertaken in accordance with the limits set in fees regulations made under Section 12(5) of the FOI.

These Fees Regulations (SI 2004/3244 Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations) allow for a refusal where the cost of compliance, for local authorities such as the Council, would exceed £450. As a guide, staff time to identify and extract this information is charged at a rate of £25 per hour.

In summary to provide the information you have requested would take us at least three days (21 hours) to compile as our finance system does not enable us to differentiate between statutory and non-statutory advertising and therefore we would have to carry out a manual trawl (scrutinise) of 8,000 lines of data on the ledger.

In estimating the cost of complying with a request for information, an authority can only take into account any reasonable costs incurred in:

“(a) determining whether it holds the information,

(b) locating the information, or a document which may contain the information,

(c) retrieving the information, or a document which may contain the information,

and

(d) extracting the information from a document containing it”.

2. How much money has been spent on advertising, or promoting posts, on facebook in each of the last three financial years? Also, how much has been spent this financial year so far.

Growth in the use of social media in recent years has opened up new opportunities for the council to engage and inform local people.

Across all of its social media channels, the council has developed an audience of over 226,000 followers receiving information on everything from bin collections to gigs at the Civic Halls.

Wolverhampton Today, the council’s Facebook page, has nearly 46,000 followers. The average for council’s is 5,000 (source Govrank). It’s a platform for sharing council updates as well as stories from across the city to help bring people together.

This fits into the council’s wider digital transformation programme where we are trying to provide as many services as possible online so that our customers can access them how and when they want to.

The same goes for the way we inform and engage local communities. Social media channels such as Facebook help us to inform people and get direct feedback on what they think. This helps shape the council’s thinking and policies. It also means we are able to deliver cheaper, more targeted and more effective communications.

An example of this is the ‘Terrific for Twos’ free-15 hour a week childcare offer. The campaign, funded by central Government, but delivered by the council achieved an 80% take-up rate and was commended by the Department for Education as an example of best practice. A big slice of the £12,104 spent on Facebook advertising in 2014-2015 and the £42,800 in 2015-2016 helped support this campaign.

Online advertising has also helped the council recruit new foster carers. Again, Facebook is an effective way of encouraging would-be foster carers to attend recruitment events.

Effective foster care recruitment helps us save on using more expensive commercial foster care agencies which, on average, costs the council £16,000 more a child every year.

Digital advertising on social media also helps us to get hundreds of thousands of people into the city to visit council venues such as the nationally renowned Civic Halls, Art Gallery and Bantock House. The Civic Halls alone bring 330,000 visitors to the city each year, generates £4.3m for the local economy and sustains 360 jobs.

The Council's spend on Facebook advertising in the last three years was:
£12,104 in 14/15, £42,789 in 15/16, £23,236 in 16/17 and £13,374 so far this financial year.

1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015 - £12,104

1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016 - £42,789

1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017 - £23,236

1 April 2017 to present - £13,374

3. How much money has been spent on advertising, or promoting posts, on twitter in each of the last three financial years? Also, how much has been spent this financial year so far.

1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 - Nil

1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 - Nil

1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 - £105 was spent on promoting three city events:

The Wolves in Wolves launch (£25)

The Prince Albert 150th celebration (£40)

The Wildlife of the Year Photography Exhibition (£40)

1 April 2017 to Present - Nil

4. How much money has been spent on online advertising in each of the last three financial years? Also, how much has been spent this financial year so far.

Between April 2014 and the present, the council spent £17,200 on other online advertising including around £9,000 of central Government funding on the free childcare offer for two-year-olds.

1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015 - £9,227

£9,227 (age and location targeted mobile web advertising to parents aged 18-42 living in Wolverhampton funded by central Government).

1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016 – none identified

1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017 – £4,338

£99 (Express and Star, school places); £1,000 (Google, fostering); £189 (Express and Star, fostering); £1,500 (Express and Star, fostering); £1,000 (Google, fostering); £600 (Express and Star, fostering);

1 April 2017 to present – £3,602

£150 (Express and Star, school places; £600 (WoW); £2,352 (Google, fostering); £500 (Express and Star, fostering);

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]

5. What is the most expensive advert(s) for each of the last three financial years?
1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015 - Free childcare for two-year-olds
1 April 2015 – 31 March 2016 – Free childcare for two-year-olds
1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017 - Fostering