

Response to Request for Information

Reference FOI 001745
Date 28 November 2017

Disposal of Plastic Cutlery

Request:

I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act to request the following information from your council:

- 1) How much money is spent by the council, or by contracted caterers, on disposable plastic-lined coffee cups, and how much did these purchases cost? I would like this information broken down by year for the past three financial years (2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17).

We have considered your question and can confirm that City of Wolverhampton Council is not obliged to supply the information you requested for the reasons set out below.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires City of Wolverhampton Council, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you, the applicant with a notice which:

- (a) states the fact,
- (b) specifies the exemption in question and
- (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies:

In relation to your particular request, the following exemption applies:

Section 12 - Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

We can confirm that the Council holds information falling within the description specified in your request. However, Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 allows a public authority to refuse a request if the cost of providing the information to the applicant would exceed the 'appropriate limit' as defined by the Freedom of Information.

The Regulations provide that the appropriate limit to be applied to requests received by local authorities is £450 (equivalent to 18 hours of work). 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.*

For the purposes of the estimate the costs of performing these activities should be estimated at a rate of £25 per hour.

The information appertaining to your question is not easily accessible and as such this information is not held as a distinct set able to be retrieved or reported on. To get the information we would need to identify every invoice that includes a charge for disposable plastic-lined coffee cups and disposable plastic cutlery from the ledger records and identify every relevant item of spend from these invoices. This would be a manual exercise and as such we believe that the aggregated time it would take to collate the information would be in excess of 18 hours (equivalent to a notional cost of £450).

Excess cost removes the City of Wolverhampton Council's obligation under the Freedom of Information, however under Section 16 – (the duty to provide advice and assistance, the Council may be able to provide answers to the request, should you wish to submit a refined request.

The Council does not hold the information for money spent by contracted caterers.

- 2) How much money is spent by the council, or by contracted caterers, on disposable plastic cutlery, and how much did these purchases cost? I would like this information broken down by year for the past three financial years (2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17).
As above.

- 3) Does the council intend to continue purchasing disposable coffee cups and plastic cutlery?
City of Wolverhampton Council will continue to purchase disposable coffee cups and plastic knives at those establishments where take-away food and drinks are sold.

We have introduced a number of non-disposable coffee cups which are available for our customers to re-use and thus avoid non-disposable coffee cups.

We are continually working with our various suppliers to reduce land-fill and encourage re-cycling where possible across the City.

- 4) Does the council have recycling facilities in its district that have the capability to recycle the specific coffee cups and plastic cutlery purchased?

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]

Amey our contractors have confirmed with our recycling suppliers that the plastic cutlery is recyclable, and the cups are also recycled so long as they are clean and do not have remaining liquid in them.