

Our Ref: FOI/1695/2009/LS

28 October 2009

Matt Hupfield  
[www.whatdotheyknow.com](http://www.whatdotheyknow.com)

Dear Mr Hupfield

## Freedom of Information Act 2000

### Your Request

On 29<sup>th</sup> June 2009 you requested the following information via the website  
[http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/home\\_education\\_quarterly\\_confere](http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/home_education_quarterly_confere)

*In relation to my request about the budget for the home education conference/forum could you know please provide the following information:*

- A list of the attendees of the last 4 conferences (Jun 08, Nov 08, Mar 09, Jun 09).*
- Confirm whether the forum is open to anyone to attend or as I suspect by invitation only. If it is an invitation only event details of the criteria used to decide who should be invited to each event.*
- For each of the last 4 conferences; details of the themes/topics for each conference, copies of any notes made before, during or after the conference and copies of any minutes from each conference.*

All information held was provided on 23 July 2009 except for "copies of any minutes from each conference". You were informed that this information may be subject to an exemption to disclosure and therefore consideration of the public interest was required. This process is now complete and the outcome of your request is as below.

### Applicable Exemption

The exemption considered in this case was section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000; Prejudice to the Conduct of Public Affairs. Specifically section 36(2)(b) in which information is exempt information if disclosure of the information under the Act:

would, or would be likely to, inhibit—



- (i) the free and frank provision of advice, or
- (ii) the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation

The application of exemption to disclosure under section 36 is also subject to a decision in the reasonable opinion of a qualified person. In Staffordshire County Council the qualified person is the Director of Law and Governance.

### **Decision**

It has been concluded that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. This has also been agreed by the qualified person. In particular it is considered that disclosure of the minutes would be detrimental to the quality and robustness of decision making within the wider public arena by limiting the opportunities for reasonable discussion.

### **Your Right of Appeal**

Should you wish to appeal this decision, Staffordshire County Council do not provide such a procedure for the application of section 36 due to the seniority of the qualified person. However this does not affect your right of appeal under the Act to the Information Commissioner. Please write to The Case Reception Unit, Customer Service Team, Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details can be found on their website here: [http://www.ico.gov.uk/complaints/freedom\\_of\\_information.aspx](http://www.ico.gov.uk/complaints/freedom_of_information.aspx)

Yours sincerely

### **Catherine Lantsbery**

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