



Home Office

**Information Access Team
Information Management Service
Financial & Commercial Group**

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Mr. William Thackeray
request-7571-2e1dd32f@whatdotheyknow.com

Case Ref: **CR 12138**
Date: **1st July 2009**

Dear Mr. Thackeray,

I write in response to your email to the Home Office dated the 5th June 2009 in which you redefined the scope of your previous FoIA request (C11139) concerning the details of gifts, donations and offer of hospitality made to the Home Office by Scientology organisations over the past five years. You will recall that we were unable to confirm whether or not the information you had requested was held by the Home Office because doing so would exceed the cost limit provisions explained in s12 of the Act.

In your email of the 5th June 2009 you requested that we conduct searches for the same information as your previous request but asked us not to search for any records that might be held by the Criminal Records Bureau, the Home Office Human Resources Directorate, and the Office for Security & Counter-Terrorism.

Your redefined request has been handled as a new request under the Freedom of Information Act and I can today provide you with a substantive response to your request.

Unfortunately, we are still unable to comply with your request on the grounds that, to provide you with confirmation as to whether or not the information you have requested is or is not held, would exceed the cost limit provided by the Secretary of State in the Freedom of Information Appropriate Limit & Fees Regulations 2004 – the regulations referred to in s12(5) of the Act.

As I discussed in Annex A of my previous letter to you (dated the 29th May 2009), information on gifts and hospitality is not held centrally, but by each individual policy unit. In order to ascertain whether or not the Home Office holds the information you have requested would again require many Home Office officials to work concurrently to determine whether or not the information you have requested is actually held.

Whilst I am happy to acknowledge that you have tried to redefine your request to avoid the cost-limit provisions of the Act by limiting the number of directorates or groups you would like us to search, I'm afraid that conducting searches of the remaining areas of the department would still exceed the cost limit by a significant margin.

If I may again refer to my previous email to you, we have estimated that to conduct a search of the second-largest part of the Home Office – the Crime & Policing Group (CPG) – would, alone, exceed 22 hours of work to locate and collate any information that may be held.

It is not Home Office policy to maintain a central hospitality and gifts register, but for records on any gifts and/or hospitality to be held by the particular policy unit that received that offer. In this instance, the cost-limit is exceeded because of the number of individual units that would have to search to provide you with any confirmation that the information you have requested is or is not held.

We are therefore unable to comply with your request for information under the provisions of s12(2) of the Act.

As I mentioned previously, you may be interested to learn that the Cabinet Office has recently published a list of hospitality received by the board members of various government departments in 2007 and includes contributions from fourteen Home Office Board members. This information is listed on page 46 of the publication available here -

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/propriety_and_ethics/civil_service/hospitality.aspx

The Home Office has recently released some information from our Gifts and Hospitality Registers in response to another Freedom of Information Act request. This request covered information held about Senior Civil Servants in the Home Office (excluding our delivery agencies (UKBA, IPS and CRB)) and is available on the Home Office website - http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/about-us/freedom-of-information/released-information/foi-archive-about-us/11482_gifts_hospitality_received

I realise that this reply may be a disappointment to you, but I look forward to hearing from you again should you wish to refine your request further.

Thank you for your interest in the Home Office.

Yours sincerely,



Ian Lister
Information Access Consultant
Information Access Team

ANNEX A – Your Right of Complaint

If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting your complaint within two months to the below address quoting reference CR 12138:

*Information Access Team
Information Management Service
Home Office
4th Floor, Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF*

Alternatively, you can email: info.access@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

During the independent review the department's handling of your information request will be reassessed by staff who were not involved in providing you with this response. Should you remain dissatisfied after this internal review, you will have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act.