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Steve Walker

(By email only: request-118072-98be36aa@whatdotheyknow.com)

5 November 2012

Dear Mr Walker,

I am writing to you in relation to your FOI request of 31 May 2012. We have re-examined the original responses to your request and the subsequent Internal Review, and believe it would be appropriate to provide some clarification of how your request was handled.

Your original request was:

"Under the Freedom of Information Act, I require to know the following:

- 1) Whether ministers, special advisors, civil servants and other government personnel were coached or in any way given preparation for their testimony to the Leveson enquiry.*
- 2) Whether any such coaching/preparation was provided to non-government witnesses, and if so, to whom.*
- 3) How any such coaching or preparation was funded.*
- 4) The cost of any such training or coaching.*
- 5) By whom the training/coaching was carried out.*
- 6) Any emails/texts sent from the private or official email accounts and mobile phones of ministers, officials and other agents regarding the above."*

The Cabinet Office originally replied that no information was held. This was the appropriate reply as no training or coaching in preparation for testimony was given to Government witnesses. You then made a request to the Cabinet Office for an internal review of this decision, which I conducted. At this stage, I interpreted your request to include legal assistance provided to witnesses by the Treasury Solicitors within the scope of 'preparation for their testimony', which was why the Cabinet Office responded to say that the information held was exempt under Section 22(1) of the Freedom of Information Act.

I have looked again at your request, and now believe that the original interpretation was the appropriate one. It is clear from the terms of your request that you are concerned with "training" or "coaching" of witnesses. I apologise for any confusion which may have been caused by our response following the internal review.

For the sake of clarity, I have set out again the Cabinet Office's response to each part of your request:

- 1) No information held because there was no coaching or training for Government witnesses
- 2) The Cabinet Office holds no information on what support was received by non-Government witnesses.
- 3) As there was no training or coaching, no information is held.
- 4) As there was no training or coaching, no information is held.
- 5) No training or coaching was carried out, therefore no information is held.
- 6) As there was no training or coaching, no information is held.

Although not within the scope of your request, you may be interested to see a response to a PQ from the then Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport on 21 June 2012, regarding legal advice for Government witnesses.

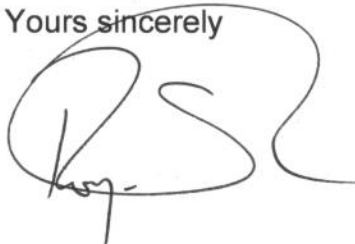
Leveson Inquiry

Helen Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how much it cost to provide him with legal advice in relation to his appearance at the Leveson Inquiry. [112773]

Mr Jeremy Hunt [*holding answer 19 June 2012*]: Government witnesses have been provided with support from Treasury Counsel and Solicitors and other officials in the preparation for the part of their evidence relating to Government business. The Government will publish the cost of Treasury Solicitors and Counsel at the end of part 1 of the inquiry.

Please do let me know if you have any further queries. I am copying this letter to Samantha Bracegirdle at the Information Commissioner's Office, who is the case officer in charge of your complaint.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R Smethurst', written over a large, loopy scribble.

ROGER SMETHURST