

Taryn Taylor

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24 April 2020

Dear Taryn Taylor,

Refs: IR2020/06227
FOI2020/03214

Freedom of Information Act 2000 Internal Review: Departmental budgets

Thank you for your email dated 20 March 2020, requesting an internal review of our response dated 13 March 2020 to your information request made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the FOI Act), under our reference: FOI2020/03214.

We have now completed our internal review and this letter informs you of its conclusions. The review was conducted by officials not involved with your original request.

Background

On 16 February 2020, you made the following request under the FOI Act:

"Under the FOI act; Can you please answer the following, to cover the years ; 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020

1)How many departments in government have had a "set budget" given for that year, only to have an amount "reshuffled, moved or used" by another department? Please itemise for each of the above years.

2) Please itemise each department with their set budget against each year. How much of their given budget was "moved" & to where it was moved to? ie; to a specific department or was it spread across many departments (and which ones were they? Or were any given amounts to pay off / or towards something else? (which was not a department) such as ie: Brexit/HS2o/Mr Graylings *non existent ferries "etc....etc..."

On 13 March we provided our response.

We confirmed that, following a search of our records, HM Treasury does hold information within the scope of your request.

However, this the information is already published and reasonable accessible to you. Section 21 of the FOI Act does not require us to separately provide that information to you. To be helpful, we explained that estimates are the process by which Parliament gives approval to departmental budgets. Main Supply Estimates, usually published in April, set

budgets at the start of the financial year. Supplementary Estimates, usually published in February, are the final opportunity to revise budgets in a given financial year.

We provided you with links to the following online documents:

Main Supply Estimates 2016-17; Supplementary and New Estimates 2016-17; Main Supply Estimates 2017-18; Supplementary Estimates 2017-18; Main Supply Estimates 2018-19; Supplementary Estimates 2018-19; Main Supply Estimates 2019-20; and Supplementary Estimates 2019-20.

We also advised you that each department produces an annual report and accounts to give an overview of its resources and how it has used them to fulfil its statutory functions during a given financial year.

On 20 March, you requested an internal review as follows:

"I am writing to request an internal review of Her Majesty's Treasury's handling of my FOI request 'Are governments "SET BUDGETS for departments " being USED elsewhere?"

The Review

I have considered the response we provided to you and whether our handling was compliant with our obligations under the FOI Act.

In our response we explained that the information you had requested is already published and is reasonably accessible to you. Section 21 of the FOI Act does not require us to separately provide that information to you. However, we provided you with links to the online documents containing this information.

Conclusion

I have concluded that the information in scope of your FOI request is published and reasonably accessible to you. HM Treasury correctly engaged Section 21 of the FOI Act when handling your request.

To be helpful, I can offer you further guidance on how to use the publicly available information to understand the government Estimates.

Each department Estimate contains details their budgets across different areas of their department's responsibility.

For example, the HM Treasury's 2019-20 Supplementary Estimate details their budget limits for their expenditure on, amongst other areas, the National Infrastructure Commission, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Government Internal Audit Agency. In the "Introduction" section of each department's Supplementary Estimate sets out the changes in budget limits within a given financial year.

I hope that by setting out the basis of the review, its findings and conclusions above, you will be assured that the Treasury has, on your behalf, carried out a thorough and considered review of the request you made and the responses that the Treasury gave under the FOI Act.

If you are not content with the outcome of this internal review you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

S Fry

Correspondence and Information Rights Team Leader