



10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

12 January 2022

Dear Mr Eaves

Our ref: FOI2021/23441

Thank you for your email of 9 December in which you make a request for information. Your full request, which is attached in the Annex, has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

I consider that to comply with your request would engage the exemption at Section 14(1) of the Act. This provides that a public authority may refuse a request where it is vexatious.

Under the Act, such a concept includes requiring a burdensome and disproportionate amount of resources, or a scattergun approach designed for the purpose of “fishing” for information.

The Information Commissioner has issued guidance on Section 14 and set out further considerations that the Commissioner has said may be relevant. The ICO’s guidance is available at:

<https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1198/dealing-with-vexatious-requests.pdf>

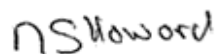
If we were to comply with your request for information, it would impose a burden on the Cabinet Office not only in collating any relevant information but also because the Cabinet Office would also be obliged to spend a considerable quantity of time giving consideration to what exemptions might apply to the information within the scope of your request that cannot easily be isolated because it is scattered throughout the requested material.

While we acknowledge that there may be a wider public interest and objective value in some of this information, disclosure would be of limited value given that there is already a detailed, independent investigation considering these matters, led by the Second Permanent Secretary.

The terms of reference for that independent investigation have been published and the findings will be made public.

In this instance, having carefully considered your request in light of the Information Commissioner's guidance and considerations, I am of the view that Section 14 is engaged and we will not be processing this request further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "NS Howard". The letters are somewhat stylized and cursive.

NICHOLAS HOWARD

Mr Andrew Eaves

Annex

I would like the full list of all Christmas parties related to and attended by Number 10 staff for December 2020. This is as well as any gathering of 2 or more people for primarily social activities.

It would be useful for the request to identify which gatherings of 2 or more people occurred that were exempt for work reasons (I.e were not primarily social activities) as well - so there is a comprehensive list.

If possible, the request should include timings, numbers attended, who attended and any recorded information relating to it - such as emails, WhatsApp's, teams messages, notes etc.



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If you are unhappy with the level of service you have received from this office in relation to any aspect of your request, you may ask for an internal review.

You should contact:

Tarley Smith
Head of Freedom of Information
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

Email: foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

You should note that the Cabinet Office will not normally accept an application for internal review if it is received more than two months after the date that the reply was issued.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF