



Home Office

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Fred Bocks

Via e-mail: [request-423478-
c3353c11@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-423478-c3353c11@whatdotheyknow.com)

Date 18th October 2017

Freedom of Information request – 45676

Dear Mr Bocks

Thank you for your e-mail of 6th August 2017 in which you ask for information regarding the Home Secretary's Departmental contact details. Your request, which is set out in full in the attached Annex A, has been handled as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

I apologise for the delay in replying to your request.

I can confirm that the Home Office holds the information which you have asked for in your request. However, after careful consideration we have decided that the information is exempt from disclosure under section 35(1)(d) of the FOIA. This provides that information can be withheld if it relates to the operation of any Ministerial private office and the public interest falls in favour of maintaining the exemption.

Further explanation of the exemption - including public interest arguments - can be found in Annex B.

If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting a complaint within two months to foirequests@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk, quoting reference 45676. If you ask for an internal review, it would be helpful if you could say why you are dissatisfied with the response.

As part of any internal review the Department's handling of your information request would be reassessed by staff who were not involved in providing you with this response. If you were to remain dissatisfied after an internal review, you would have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the FOIA.

Yours sincerely

Anne Tomkins
Information Rights Team

Switchboard 020 7035 4848

E-mail FOIRequests@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk



Home Office

Annex A: Request in full

Please can you state the Home Secretary's departmental email address (not her PA's email address or anything like that, the actual email address that the Home Secretary uses). Please can you also state the direct dial/ direct extension to her office in your building.



Annex B: Explanation of exemptions and public interest test.

Public interest test in relation to section 35(1)(d)

Some of the exemptions in the FOIA, referred to as ‘qualified’ exemptions, are subject to a public interest test (PIT). This test is used to balance the public interest in disclosure against the public interest in maintaining the exemption. We must carry out a PIT where we are considering using any of the qualified exemptions in response to a request for information.

The ‘public interest’ is not necessarily the same as what interests the public. In carrying out a PIT we consider the greater good or benefit to the community as a whole if the information is released or not. Transparency and the ‘right to know’ must be balanced against the need to enable effective government and to serve the best interests of the public.

The FOIA is ‘applicant blind’. This means that we cannot, and do not, ask about the motives of anyone who asks for information. In providing a response to one person, we are expressing a willingness to provide the same response to anyone.

Considerations in favour of disclosing the information

The Home Office recognises that there is a general public interest in transparency and openness in government. It is in the public interest that members of the public should be able to send communications to Ministers.

Considerations in favour maintaining the exemption

The Home Secretary’s office is part of the ‘safe space’ for the Home Secretary and staff to discuss and manage the Department’s work efficiently and without external interference and distraction. If the direct and personal contact details of the Home Secretary were to be disclosed, the amount of communications they would receive would almost certainly be unmanageable. This would make effective administration of the Ministerial private office impossible and that this would not be in the public interest. The public interest referred to above is met by publishing a generic contact address for the Home Office.

Conclusion

We conclude that the balance of the public interest lies in maintaining the exemption and withholding the information.

We note it has already been explained to Mr Bocks, in our letter of 17th August 2017, that he should send any queries to the Home Office’s Public Enquiries e-mail address.

