



Information Policy & Compliance
bbc.co.uk/foibbc.co.uk/privacy

Michael Pollock
Via email: request-320788-e4fe6f50@whatdotheyknow.com

4th April 2016

Dear Mr Pollock

Freedom of information request – RFI20160421

Thank you for your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“the Act”) dated 8th March 2016 requesting the following information:-

By year over the past 3 years how much was spent on procurement or "company credit" cards for the following categories:

- 1. Gifts for people leaving*
- 2. Flowers*
- 3. Chocolates*
- 4. Alcohol*
- 5. Clothing from high street shops*

For the purposes of this FOI

- The BBC’s commercial subsidiaries (including BBC Worldwide) are not subject to the Act (see section 6(1)(b)(ii) of the Act) and therefore, their spend has not been included in the figures disclosed below.
- The BBC is covered by the FOI Act only in respect of information held for purposes “other than those of journalism, art or literature”. We are, therefore, not obliged to supply information held for the purposes of creating the BBC’s output or information that supports and is closely associated with these creative activities and have not included it in this response.

Response

Questions 1, 2, 3 & 5

The BBC's financial accounting systems are not set up to capture and report in a way that would enable us to retrieve information related to these questions as there are no accounting codes designated for this type of spend. In the case of payments made by corporate credit cards, we would have to manually check all payments made for the period to try to extract the information requested and even then the information may not be held on those records. We therefore estimate that to provide this analysis would take more than two and a half days and under section 12 of the Act, we are allowed to refuse to handle the request if it would exceed the appropriate limit. The appropriate limit has been set by the Regulations (SI 2004/3244) as being £450 (equivalent to two and a half days work, at an hourly rate of £25).

Question 4

How the BBC purchases alcoholic refreshments

The main way in which alcoholic refreshments can be ordered is through a single supplier and the details provided in this response relate to this supplier.

The purchase of alcoholic refreshments can also be arranged through the BBC's providers of in-house hospitality (for fully serviced events), by staff and claimed back via expenses (such as at award ceremonies) or charged by an events company on an invoice. We estimate that these sums are significantly lower but to provide the cost via these routes would take more than two and a half days because for internal hospitality and events we would have to analyse charges to extract spend on alcoholic refreshments. In the case of expenses, this would require detailed analysis of claims. Under section 12 of the Act we are allowed to refuse to handle the request if it would exceed the appropriate limit. The appropriate limit has been set by the Regulations (SI 2004/3244) as being £450 (equivalent to two and half days work, at an hourly rate of £25).

BBC expenditure on alcoholic refreshments can be classified as non-production related 'spend' and production related 'spend'. Where the 'spend' is for production related purposes (e.g. in the case of an end of series party) the information requested falls outside of the scope of the Act because it is held for the purposes of 'journalism, art or literature.' The BBC is not required by the Act to supply information held for the purposes of creating the BBC's output or information that supports and is closely associated with these creative activities however as we are not able to separate production related spend, on this occasion we are happy to volunteer the following information which would normally fall outside the scope of the Act. The information disclosed, therefore contains non-production related and production related spend.

The BBC sometimes provides hospitality, equating to about £2 per employee per year, at events like press screenings or to programme guests and, on very exceptional occasions, to some staff. The total spent on alcohol in the last three calendar years is:-

2015 - £28,357

2014 - £45,732

2013 – £41,646

If you plan to publish or broadcast a story using the information provided in this response please include the following statement from the BBC.

A BBC spokesman said:

‘The BBC has clear policies for hospitality that have been progressively tightened. Drinks may only be purchased if there is an appropriate business reason for example production teams may provide hospitality for programme guests.’

Appeal Rights

If you are not satisfied with this response of information which is covered by the Act, you have the right to an internal review by a BBC senior manager or legal adviser. Please contact us at the address above, explaining what you would like us to review and including your reference number. If you are not satisfied with the internal review, you can appeal to the Information Commissioner. The contact details are: Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF, telephone 01625 545700 or see <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

Yours sincerely

Tracey Morris
Head of Category Sourcing – BBC Procurement