



City of Westminster

Joe

Finance & Operations - Corporate Finance
Westminster City Council
Westminster City Hall
10th Floor East
64 Victoria Street
London
SW1E 6QP
Telephone 0207 641 3921

Our ref: 1839139

Your ref:

Date: 24 March 2016

Dear Sir/Madam

Freedom of Information Act 2000

I write in relation to your request made under the Freedom of Information Act. Your request for information has now been considered and I am not obliged to supply the information you have requested.

In accordance with section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 this letter acts as a Refusal Notice.

The letter acts as a Refusal Notice as the Authority has determined that you should not be provided with the information that you have requested.

The Council has concluded that it should not confirm the liable parties, rateable values, addresses or periods of liability on National Non-Domestic Rates accounts.

This decision has been made under Section 31 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the prevention or detection of crime. The Council holds detailed financial information relating to the account holder and by confirming who was liable for specific periods the Council is opening itself up to fraudulent activity.

When dealing with enquiries about a particular account, the Council has only limited ways of ensuring that the person who contacts the Council is actually authorised to discuss and deal with the account. In most cases the enquirer can be asked to confirm the account reference number but where that is not available other information can be checked, such as the name of the account holder and the period of occupation.

By providing information such as the name of the occupier and the period of occupation to the "world at large" the Council's ability to protect any confidential information, such as bank account details or other financial

information would be significantly decreased. The council would also be significantly increasing the risk of fraudulent refunds being claimed on the account as well as other fraudulent activity. It is therefore this Authority's view that Section 31 of the Freedom of Information Act applies to this request.

Section 31 is a qualified exemption to which the public interest test must be applied. While there is inherent public interest in the public authority's financial transactions, it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure as to do so would prejudice the objective of prevention of crime and may increase the burden on the public purse.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your original letter and should be addressed to:

Knowledge and Information Management Team
Westminster City Hall
10th Floor East
64 Victoria Street
London
SW1E 6QP
xxxx@xxxxxxxxxxxx.xxx.xx

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Further information is also available from the Information Commissioner at:

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

Tel: 0303 123 1113 or 01625 54 57 45
Fax: 01625 524510
Web: www.ico.org.uk

I will now close your request as of this date.

Yours faithfully

Parmeen Sarda

