



Cabinet Office

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70 Whitehall
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foi-team@cabinetoffice.gov.uk
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Amanda Hart

By email: request-680788-088817c4@whatdotheyknow.com

FOI Reference: FOI2020/10342

08/09/2020

Dear Amanda Hart

I refer to your request where you asked:

"Dear Cabinet Office,

If it exists, please kindly provide a copy of your review of the country's readiness for a Covid-19 secondwave. We asked the department of health and they claimed you have it.

If available, we're particularly interested in the status of this review as of June 2020.

For public ref:

https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/review_of_the_readiness_for_covi

I am writing to advise you that following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that some of the information you requested is held by the Cabinet Office.

However, the information is exempt under section 35(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act, which protects the formulation of policy. Disclosure would weaken Ministers' ability to discuss controversial and sensitive topics free from premature public scrutiny.

Section 35 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours our release of this material. There is a general public interest in disclosure of information and I recognise that openness in government may increase public trust in and engagement with the government. These public interests have to be weighed against a strong public interest that policy-making and its implementation are of the highest quality and informed by a full consideration of all the options. Ministers must be able to discuss policy freely and frankly, exchange views on available options and understand their possible implications.

The candour of all involved would be affected by their assessment of whether the content of the discussions will be disclosed prematurely. If discussions were routinely made public there is a risk that Ministers may feel inhibited from being frank and candid with one another. As a result the quality of debate underlying collective decision making would decline, leading to worse informed and poorer decision making. Taking into account all the circumstances of this case, I have concluded that the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact the FOI Team quoting the reference number above.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request or wish to request an internal review, you should write to:

Eirian Walsh Atkins
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 your internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by Cabinet Office. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. B. M.', written in a cursive style.

*FOI Team
Cabinet Office*