

From: Freedom of Information

Sent: 16 September 2020 16:17

To:

Subject: Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/316)

Dear

Freedom of Information Response (Our Ref: K/20/316)

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 18 August 2020, reference K/20/316.

Your request read:

“1. Please provide a total figure for expenditure on staff parties for the financial year 2019-2020.

Staff parties include, but are not limited to, leaving parties, anniversary parties, birthday parties and staff award ceremonies.

Please provide a breakdown of the cost of each party for the financial year. For example:

2019-20

Birthday party: £xxx

Leaving party: £xxx

Award ceremony: £xxx

Total: £xxxx”

It is very unlikely that any information relevant to your request is held by the University of Leeds. Our financial procedures set out that staff parties should not be held at the expense of the University. There are occasional exceptions to this rule permitted, for instance where it is appropriate to recognise exceptional service e.g. in the event of the retirement of a very long-serving member of staff, but this would be very rare and costs would be deliberately kept to an absolute minimum. It is more typical for individual teams or departments to independently organise celebrations for staff; arranged and funded on a personal basis.

Since March 2020, almost all staff have been working remotely. Our financial year runs alongside our academic year (August – July) and as such more than a quarter of the financial year is covered by this remote working period. This further limits the chance of information relevant to your request being held.

However, in order to categorically establish whether any information is held – as we are required to do under the terms of the FOI Act – extensive research would be required. We therefore consider that to respond to your request as it is currently framed would exceed the cost limit as set out in Section 12(1) of the FOI Act. Section 12(1) states that a public authority can refuse a request if complying with it would exceed the appropriate limit of £450. For the purposes of FOI, time spent on the permitted activities is calculated at the flat rate of £25 per person, per hour. The

appropriate limit therefore represents the estimated cost of one person spending 18 hours to determine whether the information is held, and to locate, retrieve and extract the information.

We have outlined the reasons for invoking Section 12(1) below.

We would need to ask all teams, departments, schools and faculties to review their spend information for the 2019/20 financial year. Because staff parties are not a regular expense, there is no set way any associated cost/spend should be recorded, nor any means of establishing the level (e.g. team/department/faculty) at which it would have been recorded. As such, an extensive manual review would be required. There are no means by which we can provide an estimate of how long this would take. However, simply based on the number of teams who would need to contribute to this, we are satisfied that it would take far in excess of the 18-hour appropriate limit set out at section 12(1).

When refusing a request under section 12(1), we are obligated to provide advice and assistance on how you might be able to reframe your request in order to reduce the total amount of time it is likely to take to respond. As outlined above, in this case it is extremely unlikely that any information will be held. However, if you were to resubmit your request and limit the scope to a single team or department, or if you were to specify a particular event which you know has taken place, we may be able to provide a further response.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have any questions about this email, however, please do not hesitate to contact us on foi@leeds.ac.uk

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, you can request an Internal Review. Requests for Internal Review should be made in writing using the following contact information:

Post: Mr D Wardle
Deputy Secretary
The University of Leeds
Leeds
LS2 9JT

Email: foi@leeds.ac.uk

Requests for Internal Review should be submitted within 40 working days of receiving the University's response to your request. Further information about how the University manages Freedom of Information requests and about our complaints procedure is also available on our website (www.leeds.ac.uk).

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. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review/complaints procedure provided by the University. The Information Commissioner can be contacted

at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow,
Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Kind regards

Chloe Wilkins

Freedom of Information Officer

Secretariat

University of Leeds