

Sent via email: 12 July 2022 11:49

Dear [REDACTED]

Please find below response to your freedom on information request dated 14 June.

Can you provide details of the procurement exercise undertaken in relation to the move to Canary Wharf?

Genomics England has been planning to move out of its current set of offices for 2+ years. As a GovCo we have to agree property moves within the DHSC and the Cabinet Office. We have explored a large number of sites in recent years and, in consultation with the DHSC and the Cabinet Office, a final decision was made in Autumn 2021, to move to the office at Canary Wharf on a 5 year lease.

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What consultations took place with staff and any reports produced from those consultations?

GEL engages with its staff on a regular basis on our workplace offer and our approach to hybrid working. GEL held a number of workshops in spring and summer 2021 which were open to all staff and which introduced our Blended Working model which was launched in late July 2021.

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How much will the move cost you?

Rental cost information is subject to exemption under Section 43 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in that disclosure would, or would likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of our landlord and ourselves. This exemption is qualified in that information can only be withheld if the public interest test set out in Section 43 (2)(2) of the FOIA, in maintaining the exemption, outweighs the public interest in disclosure. We have considered the following factors when applying the public interest test to this exemption :-

Does this information related to, or could it impact on a commercial activity?

Yes, the commercial activities of Genomics England and our landlord could be compromised if costs of the lease were to be disclosed as it would affect the ability to negotiate competitive future leases.

Would there be damage to reputation or business confidence?

Yes, it is important that Genomics England maintains confidential contractual relations with its commercial suppliers to ensure trust and confidence in it as a contracting party.

Whose commercial interests are affected?

Genomics England's and the landlord's.

Is the information commercially sensitive?

Yes, the lease is subject to market conditions.

What is the likelihood of prejudice being caused?

High, in that disclosure would damage Genomics England's ability to price themselves as a viable renter within a commercially competitive market.

The public interest applies. In relation to the public interest test the following have been recorded :

- Public interest factors in favour of disclosure
- Public interest factors in favour of maintaining the exemption
- The outcome of the public interest test.

The exemption can only be withheld if the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

There is inherent public interest in ensuring that there is openness and transparency in the spending of public money. Transparency is likely to increase confidence in procedures and decisions made by Genomics England. It will also enable the public to understand whether Genomics England is getting value for money from its decision to rent at Canary Wharf.

Factors in favour of maintaining the exemption :

Disclosure would damage Genomics England's future ability to negotiate leases competitively. Genomics England must ensure that its business activities are confidential to maintain business confidence from those it contracts with.

The factors against disclosure outweigh the factors for disclosure. As the public interest test is met, the exemption applies and rental information for Canary Office space will not be disclosed.

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In the medium to long term will there be any savings from this move?

Yes, savings will be achieved in that we will be having our three current offices in one space when we move to Canary Wharf. This will result in reducing net running costs.