

Email:

Your Ref:

Our Ref: FOI IAT 10209

Please ask for: Claire Jacobs

Direct Line / 01432 260 340

Extension:

Fax:

E-mail: accesstoinformation@herefordshire.gov.uk

7 September 2015

Dear Sir,

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST FOI IAT 10209

Further to previous correspondence, your request for information has now been considered, and the council's response is set out below:

Q1 In house fostering business case / plan 2015

The business case for the in house fostering service will be part of a formal decision report that will be published in the future. The council has committed investing existing resources to this service, however there are still some details to be finalised, mainly around costs, which will then finalise the decision report for formal approval.

As the information contained in the draft document is intended for future publication on the council website, and was so at the time that your request was made, I consider it to be exempt under Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

In deciding this exemption I have had regard to the public interest in release of the document ahead of it being completed. I have considered the public interest as set out below:

The public interest in release of the business case

- There has been interest by members of the public in the council's plans for its fostering service amidst the austerity measures being considered by the council and the subsequent impact on the community.
- There is a need for openness and transparency in decision making and scrutiny of the spending of public monies.

The public interest in not releasing the business case and publishing it at a future date

- Early disclosure of the information whilst incomplete is likely to give rise to incorrect assumptions being based upon the data in its current state. The council is still gathering information to inform the business case and parts of the business case still depend on this data. It would not be fair to all concerned to provide information that may mislead or confuse members of the public before and/or at the time that the final version is published. Some families are in discussion with social care regarding the new service meeting the respite needs of their children in the future. Some aspects of the service are informed by this, which involves more personal interest specific to those families than a wider public view of specific details. It would not be fair on these families in particular.
- There is an approved process for publication as part of a decision report in line with existing practice, which will allow full scrutiny of the business case by the council and members of the public.
- Although there is not currently a set date for publication, it is planned that the information is made available within a matter of weeks.

On balance, I have found that the public interest in not releasing the business case in its current state outweighs the public interest in releasing it now. Please take this letter as a refusal notice under Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request or you would like a review of the response provided, further information regarding our review procedure is available in the 'Internal Review Procedure for EIR and FOI requests' which is published on Herefordshire Council's website via the following link:

www.herefordshire.gov.uk/government-citizens-and-rights/data-protection-and-freedom-of-information/data-protection

Further information is also available from the Information Commissioner at:

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

Telephone: 01625 545 745 www.ico.org.uk

Yours faithfully

CLAIRE JACOBS

INFORMATION ACCESS OFFICER