



Information Governance Team

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Dear Sir/Madam

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Request ID: FOI402941849

Thank you for your request for information relating to library purchases.

You have requested the following information:

This is an information request relating to the purchase of books by the council for libraries within the council's remit.

Please include the information, broken down by year, for each of the following periods; 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22:

1. A list of all the books purchased, including the number of copies and the names of the books

We hold the information which you have asked for, but we have estimated that the cost of meeting your request would exceed the cost limit of £450 specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees Regulations 2004). This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 18 hours or more, in determining whether the information is held, locating, retrieving and extracting it.

The information is not held in a reportable format where we can easily extract the data for purchases solely for books. To answer your request, an officer will need to manually review each individual purchase made in the requested time period to determine how many books were purchased and their titles. For 2019/20 alone, there were approximately 37,278 purchases. This work has therefore estimated to exceed the 18-hour limit under the Act. This part of your request

has been refused under section 12(2) of the Act.

2. The total spend on books, broken down by year and by the spend on each book (if multiple copies of the same book were purchased, then you can express this as a single figure)

In regards to expenditure on individual titles, it is confirmed that the Council does hold information pursuant to your request. However, it is our view that the information is exempt from disclosure under Section 43(2) – Commercially Sensitive Information.

Section 43(2) exempts information from disclosure where disclosure of that information would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (an individual, a company, the public authority itself or any other legal entity). It is the Council's position that the third-party providers and its own commercial interests would be prejudiced and/or would be likely to be prejudiced by the disclosure of the requested information.

Once the information is disclosed this means that it will be in the public domain and it could not only be used by the requester but also any other providers in a similar market.

Arguments in favour of disclosure.

- Promote accountability and transparency for the Council's decisions and in its spending of public money.
- Assist the public to understand and challenge our decisions.
- Inform the public of the activities carried out on their behalf, allowing for more user involvement and collaborative decision making.
- Enable the public to better scrutinise the public monies spent

Arguments against disclosure.

- There is a public interest in allowing public authorities to withhold information which if disclosed, would reduce providers' ability to compete in a commercial environment.
- The successful providers operate in a competitive market. If prejudicing the commercial interests of the successful providers in the market would distort competition in that market, this would not be in the public interest.
- Disclosure of information may cause unwarranted reputational damage or loss of confidence in the Council.
- Revealing information such as a pricing mechanism can be detrimental to a provider's commercial interest. If an organisation has knowledge of a provider's business model, it can exploit this for its own commercial interest. This would also have a detrimental impact on the Council on other contracts and procurements by distorting the market, for the reasons stated above.

Having considered the arguments for and against disclosure, the Council has decided that the public interest in this case is best served by maintaining the exemption under section 43(2) FOIA and by not disclosing the information requested.

However, to further assist we are able to provide the overall spend by year and number of books purchased by year and provide further direction to the Library Catalogue.

Book Acquisitions

2019/20: 37,278

2020/21: 19,227

Further details on the books held by Coventry Libraries and Information Service can be found on the Library Catalogue on the following link:

<https://librarycatalogue.coventry.gov.uk/iguana/www.main.cls?surl=CoventryLibrariesHomePage>

Total book spend

2019/20: £275,584

2020/21: £156,067

The information for financial year 2021/22 is not currently available as this data will be finalised as part of the Library Services return to CIPFA. This information will be available to request after July 2022.

The supply of information in response to a FOI/EIR request does not confer an automatic right to re-use the information. You can use any information supplied for the purposes of private study and non-commercial research without requiring further permission. Similarly, information supplied can also be re-used for the purposes of news reporting. An exception to this is photographs. Please contact us if you wish to use the information for any other purpose.

For information, we publish a variety of information such as: [FOI/EIR Disclosure Log](#), [Publication Scheme](#), [Facts about Coventry](#) and [Open Data](#) that you may find of useful if you are looking for information in the future.

If you are unhappy with the handling of your request, you can ask us to review our response. Requests for reviews should be submitted within 40 days of the date of receipt of our response to your original request – email: infogov@coventry.gov.uk

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our review, you can write to the Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or email icocasework@ico.org.uk.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in your response.

Yours faithfully

Information Governance