

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 1 February 2018

Public Authority: Greater London Authority
Address: City Hall
London
SE1 2AA

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant has requested correspondence between the Mayor of London's office and David Beckham or his management company between January 2011 and March 2015. The Greater London Authority identified four letters which it provided to the complainant but stated no further information was held.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that the GLA does not hold any further information within the scope of the request and has therefore complied with its obligations under section 1(1) of the FOIA.

Request and response

3. On 3 April 2017 the complainant wrote to the Mayor of London's office (part of the Greater London Authority) and requested information in the following terms:

"My request concerns the football star David Beckham (born 2 May 1975)

Please note that the reference to David Beckham below should be taken to mean Mr Beckham himself and or his representative Simon Oliveira and or the management company Doyen Global and or anyone else specifically acting on Mr Beckham's behalf.

Please note that the reference to the Mayor should include the Mayor himself and or his private office and or anyone acting specifically on his behalf.

Please note that I am only interested in information which relates to 1 January 2011 to 1 March 2014.

1... During the aforementioned period did Mr Beckham exchange correspondence or communications including emails with the Mayor.

2...If the answer is yes can you please provide copies of this correspondence and communication including emails. Please note that I am interested in receiving both sides of the correspondence and communication."

4. The GLA responded on 3 May 2017 and attached what it described as the relevant information. The complainant asked for an internal review of this response on 9 May 2017. He asked the review to take into account the ICO's guidance on destroyed documents. This was later clarified by the complainant as being mentioned with the intention to ensure all relevant documentation was provided including documents for the period which may have been destroyed.
5. Following an internal review the GLA wrote to the complainant on 30 May 2017. It stated that it had provided all of the information it held within the scope of the request and it had not identified anything to suggest any correspondence was missing or destroyed when it should have been formally retained.

Scope of the case

6. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 17 June 2017 to complain about the way his request for information had been handled. Specifically he raised concerns that the GLA had only provided one side of the correspondence when he asked for communication from and to Mr Beckham and his management/representatives.
7. The Commissioner considers the scope of her investigation to be to determine if any further information is held by the GLA within the scope of the request.

Reasons for decision

8. Section 1(1) of the FOIA says that anyone who requests information from a public authority is entitled (a) to be told whether the authority

holds the information and (b) to have it communicated to him or her if it is held.

9. In response to the Commissioner's enquiries around the searches conducted to identify information within the scope of the request; the GLA has provided additional explanations to the Commissioner.
10. The GLA firstly clarified that the time period the request covers (1 January 2011 to 1 March 2014) the Mayor of London was Boris Johnson. At the time the request was received the Mayor of London was Sadiq Khan. The information that was identified and provided to the complainant in response to the request consisted of four letters dated between 5 October 2012 and 16 September 2013 from Boris Johnson to Mr Beckham care of his management company. The GLA has pointed out that the correspondence requested therefore relates to the previous administration and this is of relevance to the complaint.
11. In explaining why no further information is held, including any correspondence received by the Mayor, his private office or anyone acting on his behalf, the GLA has explained its processes in more detail. The GLA uses a correspondence management system ("CMS") to register, allocate, track and respond to public correspondence it received. This includes all email correspondence sent to mayor@london.gov.uk, submissions from its 'Contact Us' forms on its website and letters received through the post. The CMS is not used to manage or store general email correspondence which GLA staff engage in as part of their day to day activities. This correspondence is stored in Microsoft Outlook accounts used by each member of staff.
12. The CMS system is managed by the GLA's Public Liaison Unit who load each piece of correspondence on to the system, hard copies are scanned and uploaded. The GLA provided the Commissioner with an example of a case and the correspondence and meta-data held on its CMS system as well as explaining that correspondence cases remain in the "live" environment for two years. After this time they are moved to an archive where they are generally held for four years. Records are then deleted from the CMS archive on a yearly basis and this was last done in May 2016. The GLA are therefore satisfied no information within the scope of the complainant's request would have been deleted after the request was made.
13. The GLA explained that correspondence which originates from the Mayor directly is recorded and retained by the Mayor's Correspondence Manager. This correspondence is recorded in a database. The information disclosed to the complainant was information held by the Mayor's Correspondence Manager. Any correspondence generated by the Deputy Mayors would be held by their support officers and

responses to this correspondence would be captured on the CMS. Replies directly to an email account of a Deputy Mayor would be held in Microsoft Outlook accounts.

14. The Commissioner is satisfied with the level of detail provided by the GLA to explain its various ways of capturing and recording correspondence sent and received and acknowledges that comprehensive searches of the CMS and relevant Outlook accounts would be sufficient to locate any information within the scope of the request.
15. Turning to the specific searches conducted of these systems; the GLA advised is only searched the CMS archive as the live system would not hold any information covering the period of time the request covered. Searches were conducted of the archive using a range of search terms which the GLA has provided to the Commissioner. The Commissioner considers the search terms to have been wide enough to have captured any relevant information. She also notes that the GLA searched in not just the 'sent' and 'subject' fields but also the text of correspondence to ensure any relevant information was identified.
16. For Mayoral correspondence the Mayor's Correspondence Manager searched using the same search terms and identified the four letters that were disclosed to the complainant. As the request asked for correspondence involving the Mayor's Private Office the GLA also attempted to identify current and former members of staff who may have been involved in correspondence on behalf of the Mayor. However, as all of the senior officials of the Private Office support staff who worked for Boris Johnson left when Sadiq Kahn became Mayor this was not possible and the GLA has only been able to confirm that the email and IT accounts for these officials were deleted from GLA servers shortly after they left the GLA. The GLA further added that back-up copies from its servers are only retained for a three-month period.
17. The GLA also asked members of its Sport, Culture and Events teams to conduct searches for relevant information. Whilst the GLA noted these teams are not part of the Private Office it conducted these extra steps to ensure no information was missed. These searches did not result in any information being located.
18. The Commissioner has considered the request and the responses and explanations provided to her by the GLA. The Commissioner considers the GLA has provided comprehensive details of its systems and its searches. She accepts that searching the CMS and Outlook accounts of relevant staff was reasonable in the circumstances and that the search terms used by the GLA were wide-ranging enough to identify any relevant information. She also notes that the complainant was asking for

relatively old information that dated back to a previous Mayor of London's time in office; restricting the effectiveness of the searches that could be conducted due to staff changes and retention periods.

19. As such the Commissioner is satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, the GLA does not hold any further information and has complied with section 1(1) of the FOIA.

Right of appeal

20. Either party has the right to appeal against this decision notice to the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights). Information about the appeals process may be obtained from:

First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights)
GRC & GRP Tribunals,
PO Box 9300,
LEICESTER,
LE1 8DJ

Tel: 0300 1234504

Fax: 0870 739 5836

Email: GRC@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/general-regulatory-chamber

21. If you wish to appeal against a decision notice, you can obtain information on how to appeal along with the relevant forms from the Information Tribunal website.
22. Any Notice of Appeal should be served on the Tribunal within 28 (calendar) days of the date on which this decision notice is sent.

Signed

Jill Hulley
Senior Case Officer
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF