

Enquiry Number - FS 51928404

Request and Response:

Request:

I would like to know how much the council has paid in costs relating to High Court proceedings involving Councillor Mahboob Hussain surrounding the publication of the Wragge report. I would like to know the total cost to the council from the proceedings, in which Councillor Hussain tried to block the publication of the report and subsequently launched an appeal against the publication, including the travel costs.

I would like the details of what separate payments related to and when they were made.

Response:

The council's in-house legal team had conduct of the proceedings that you are referring to and were supported by external counsel.

We are awaiting the final fee notes from counsel for the hearing that took place on 3rd and 4th May so the figures provided are based on the fee estimates that were provided to the council and may not be the final total.

I provide below the costs which were associated with Councillor Hussain's injunction to cease publication of the Wragge report and his subsequent judicial review appeal regarding the publication only.

Advice was provided throughout the whole period and billed on various different dates from February 2016 to date. Travel costs to attend conferences with counsel and the hearing on 3rd and 4th May 2017 purely in connection with the injunction and appeal against the Wragge report were £1239.60. Counsel fees for advising the council in relation to the injunction to cease publication of the Wragge report, the appeal against the publication of the Wragge report and advocacy in relation to the same were approximately £73,235.00.

Once the decision of the hearing is known the council will be seeking the recovery of its legal fees if appropriate.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date of receipt of the response to your request, and should be addressed to:

Information Management Unit
Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Olcibury
West Midlands
B69 3DE
Email — Info_Management@sandwell.gov.uk

Please note that any additional questions to your original request will not be answered at internal review stage and should be presented in a separate, new Freedom of Information request.

If you are not content with the outcome of an internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office

Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

I trust that the above information is satisfactory.

If you wish to receive further information in regards to this request or wish to submit a Freedom of Information Request please forward your request to info_management@sandwell.gov.uk or Information Management Unit, Sandwell Council House, Freeth Street, Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 3DE.