

Independent Commission on Freedom of Information

Minutes of the 7th meeting

4pm to 6pm, Monday 11th January 2016

102 Petty France, Room 10.50b

Attendees

Lord Burns (Chairman)
Lord Carlile of Berriew
Dame Patricia Hodgson
The Rt Hon Lord Howard of Lympne
The Rt Hon Jack Straw

Secretariat

Stephen Jones (Secretary)
Narinder Tamana
Alexandra Avlonitis
Poli Stuart Lacey

Introduction and minutes of last meeting

- 1.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.
- 1.2 The Chairman explained that he would be meeting with the Chief Executive of the Charity Commission and the Rt Hon. Norman Baker.
- 1.3 Steve Jones provided an update on the summarisation of responses and indicated that significant progress had been made with the 38 Degrees responses.

Communications update

- 2.1 Poli Stuart Lacey provided an update on the news stories since the last meeting. Commissioners agreed it was important not to be distracted from their core task of considering the evidence and reaching a balanced view.
- 2.2 The Commissioners were informed that a bid from ITN for Lord Burns and Jack Straw to appear on a panel discussion on FOI had been declined so that the Commission could complete its deliberations and produce a final report.

Paper 1: Revising sections 35/36 FOIA

- 3.1 The Chairman explained that the discussion paper built on the earlier section 35/36 paper. The paper set out several options for amending section 35 and 36 in light of some of the responses that had been received and considered. The Commissioners discussed and agreed to reflect further along with the oral evidence sessions and the written responses.

Paper 2: Public interest paper

- 4.1 Paper 2 set out options for the public interest test. Commissioners noted the content and agreed to reflect further along with the oral evidence sessions and the written responses.

Paper 3: Transparency paper

- 5.1 Paper 3 considered options for how public authorities might increase proactive transparency. The Commissioners discussed the options and agreed to consider further in light of the oral evidence sessions.

Paper 4 – Burdens paper

- 6.1 Paper 4 considered options for reducing burdens on public authorities in light of the responses summarised at that point. Again Commissioners noted its contents and agreed to consider further with the oral evidence.

Paper 5 – Arrangements for the oral evidence sessions

- 7.1 Paper 5A (with attached annexes 5B and 5C) set out in detail the arrangements for the oral evidence sessions. Commissioners agreed on the format for questions and also that witnesses would be invited to provide a short opening statement. The Commissioners were informed that following representations the Press Association had been invited to give evidence alongside the Society of Editors on the 25th January. The slot had been extended to 50 minutes to accommodate both organisations.
- 7.2 Commissioners agreed to provide formatting styles for their briefing packs.

Any other business

- 8.1 The next meeting would be held on the 26th January at 1pm.

Secretariat

January 2016