

London Borough of Barnet
2 Bristol Avenue,
Colindale,
London, NW9 4EW
24 February 2023
Our ref: 9163940

Thank you for your request received on 8 February 2023, for the following information:

I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information. Specifically, I would like to request:

*** The total number of domestic visits (excluding commercial premises) to address mice and/or rat infestations in the last three years:
Total number of residential visits (or please state if you do not offer this service)**

2020

2021

2022

*** The total amount spent on pest control service visits to address mice and/or rat infestations for domestic properties in the last three years:**

Total cost spent (residential only)

2020

2021

2022

*** Please state how much you charge for rodent treatment for a domestic property (or if it is free), for householders that do not qualify for a discount:**

I would be grateful if you could provide this information in the above format within an excel spreadsheet.

If it is not possible to provide the information requested due to the cost and time involved, please provide advice and assistance, as to how I can refine my request.

If you have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact me via email or phone and I would be very happy to clarify what I am asking for. My details are outlined below.

We have processed this request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

Response

I can confirm that London Borough of Barnet holds the information you requested. However, we believe that the exception detailed below apply to some of this information and this is withheld. Please see the Refusal Notice below.

Barnet pest control is a private company run by Regional Enterprise Ltd and so there is commercial confidentiality – see Refusal Notice below.

**** The total number of domestic visits (excluding commercial premises) to address mice and/or rat infestations in the last three years:***

Total number of residential visits (or please state if you do not offer this service)

2020

2020- 623 Residential Pest Treatments - 7 commercial ***

2021

2021-788 Residential Pest Treatments - 6 commercial ***

2022

2022- 213 Residential Pest treatments - 3 commercial ***- **till 1/4/22**

Service tracker treatment visits for Rats and Mice – 1836 **** **from 1/4/22-31/12/22**

Footnotes

*** Treatment for rats and mice (please note that it is not possible to calculate number of visits just premises treated)

****Addresses on service tracker do not distinguish if commercial or residential.

**** The total amount spent on pest control service visits to address mice and/or rat infestations for domestic properties in the last three years:
Total cost spent (residential only)***

2020

2021

2022

Information withheld, see refusal notice below.

Refusal Notice

Section 21 – Information readily accessible

We consider that the absolute exemption set out in Section 21 (Information accessible by other means) applies to the information requested because the information requested is already reasonably accessible elsewhere. Re (Regional Enterprise) Ltd is the joint venture between the London Borough of Barnet and Capita set up in 2013. Details of the contract can be accessed at:

<https://open.barnet.gov.uk/dataset/regional-enterprise-ltd-re-contract>

The pest treatment prices are contained in the following link:

www.barnet.gov.uk/environmental-problems/pest-control/pest-treatment-prices

Section 43 – Commercial Interests

Section 43(2) In addressing the commercial interests and the prejudice that would or would be likely to occur the council has consulted with the Capita Group, and has asked them to explain and justify what prejudice could be caused, how and how likely this would be. The council is relying upon the lower threshold of likelihood that disclosure 'would be likely' to have a prejudicial effect. The party whose commercial interests would, or would be likely to be prejudiced if the withheld information was disclosed is the Capita Group.

The harm that would be likely to be caused to Capita Group is that they would be likely to lose business and therefore income. This would include ongoing and future negotiations related to this agreement and bids and negotiations Capita Group are involved in for similar contracts

Competitors who are competing for business from other local authorities. This would be likely to lead to Capita Group being unsuccessful in obtaining tenders or losing business to competitors. This loss of business would be harmful to their commercial interests. The link between the disclosure and harm is that knowledge of the information would allow competitors an advantage over Capita Group in pricing tenders which would be likely to lead to Capita Group being unsuccessful in gaining business.

The Public Interest Test. Factors in favour of disclosure

1. It is in the public interest for the Council to be open and transparent, especially with regard to a unique and wide-ranging contract such as this.
2. There is a general public interest in facilitating the accountability of public authorities for decisions they take, and also allow individuals to understand decisions made by public authorities and how public money is spent.
3. The council has a fiduciary duty to its residents to spend council money properly.

Factors in favour of withholding

1. It is not in the public interest for the council to disclose information that would be likely to damage the commercial interests of a company, as this could lead to financial problems for the company and or loss of jobs, which is not in the public interest.
2. It is not in the public interest for commercially sensitive information about one company to be released, when the same category of information relating to others companies is not so released, thus putting one company at a commercial disadvantage.
3. It is not in the public interest for information to be released which could negatively influence ongoing and future negotiations associated with this contract, as this would be likely to have an adverse effect on value for money for the council and by extension the people of Barnet.
4. The withholding of the exempt sections will not negatively affect accountability, as the council has full and proper mechanisms in place for this, and there are sufficient statutory methods for the public to be involved in ensuring accountability, for example the Overview and Scrutiny process, councillors involvement, and the Audit Commission Act process

Further information

If you are interested in the data that the council holds you may wish to visit Open Barnet, the council's data portal. This brings together all our published datasets and other information of interest on one searchable database for anyone, anywhere to access. <http://open.barnet.gov.uk/>

Advice and Assistance : Direct Marketing

If you are a company that intends to use the names and contact details of council officers (or other officers) provided in this response for direct marketing, you need to be registered with the Information Commissioner to process personal data for this purpose. You must also check that the individual (whom you wish to contact for direct marketing purposes) is not registered with one of the Preference Services to prevent Direct Marketing. If they are you must adhere to this preference.

You must also ensure you comply with the Privacy Electronic and Communications Regulations (PECR). For more information follow this Link www.ico.org.uk

For the avoidance of doubt the provision of council (and other) officer names and contact details under FOI does not give consent to receive direct marketing via any media and expressly does not constitute a 'soft opt-in' under PECR.

Your rights

If you are unhappy with the way your request for information has been handled, you can request a review within the next 40 working days by writing to the Information Management Team at: foi@barnet.gov.uk. Or by post to Records & Information Management Service, Assurance Group, London Borough of Barnet, 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, NW9 4EW

If, having exhausted our review procedure, you remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request or complaint, you will have a right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF (telephone: 0303 123 1113; website www.ico.org.uk). There is no charge for making an appeal.