

REASONS FOR NOT PROVIDING INFORMATION Annex A

An exemption applies

An exemption under section 38(1)(b) of FOISA applies to some of the information you have requested as follows:

This information relates to personal data relating to a third party and applied in the following cases:

- Scottish Government officials below the Senior Civil Service.
- Names of individuals who did not give permission for release.

It would not be the expectation of these individuals that their personal information would be released and disclosing it would contravene the data protection principles in Article 5(1) of the General Data Protection Regulation and in section 34(1) of the Data Protection Act 2018.

This exemption is not subject to the 'public interest test', so we are not required to consider if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exemption.

An exemption applies, subject to the public interest test

Section 30(b)(i) – free and frank provision of advice

An exemption under section 30(b)(i) of FOISA (free and frank provision of advice) applies to some of the information requested.

This exemption applies because disclosure would, or would be likely to, inhibit substantially the free and frank provision of advice. This exemption recognises the need for officials to have a private space within which to provide free and frank advice to Ministers before the Scottish Government reaches a settled public view. Disclosing the content of free and frank advice on budgets will substantially inhibit the provision of such advice in the future, particularly because these discussions relate to a sensitive or controversial issue such as budgetary decisions.

This exemption is subject to the 'public interest test'. Therefore, taking account of all the circumstances of this case, we have considered if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exemption. We have found that, on balance, the public interest lies in favour of upholding the exemption. We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosing information as part of open, transparent and accountable government, and to inform public debate. However, there is a greater public interest in allowing a private space within which officials can provide full and frank advice to Ministers, as part of the process of exploring and refining the Government's policy position on budget spend that is sound and likely to be effective. This private thinking space is essential to enable all options to be properly considered, based on the best available advice, so that good policy decisions can be taken. Premature disclosure is likely to undermine the full and frank discussion of issues between Ministers and officials, which in turn will undermine the quality of the policy making process, which would not be in the public interest.