

From: Freedom of Information Requests

Sent: 19 August 2025 11:31

To:

Subject: FOI Response

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request dated 24 July 2025 for information about correspondence. Please find below City of Doncaster Council's responses to the questions you have raised.

Request

1. All correspondence – including emails, letters, texts, WhatsApp and Signal messages – between any of the following councillors — Guy Aston, Jackie Dudley, Rachel Reed — and representatives and/or employees of the company/political party, Reform UK. When searching email inboxes, your search can include the email suffix: @reformparty.uk

2. All notes, briefings, minutes and/or attendance lists of all meetings between any of the following councillors — Guy Aston, Jackie Dudley, Rachel Reed — and representatives/employees of the company/political party, Reform UK.

Please do so for the period of 01/05/2025 to now.

Response

This information is exempt from disclosure under Section 36(2)(b) and 36(2)(c) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Section 36 allows a public authority to refuse to disclose information if, in the reasonable opinion of a qualified person, it would or would be likely to inhibit the free and frank provision of advice, the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation and would otherwise prejudice or would be likely to prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs.

The Councillor's role requires them to give opinions and share their views in an environment where they are free from external scrutiny, known as a safe space. This ensures they are not constrained in the information they disclose due to the 'chilling effect' of it being known outside of this process, which would likely to be the case if they felt this information would be released to the public. Release of information into the public domain could have an impact on this process, affecting decisions to be taken and opinions on how to address any issues raised. Disclosure would be likely to negatively impact the ability of the Council to offer free and frank provision of advice and an exchange of views for the purpose of the Councillor's roles.

Public Interest Test

This exemption is qualified and on that basis I have considered whether or not in this case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

In coming to a decision to maintain the exemption I have considered the following public interest factors in favour of disclosing the information:

- There is a need to ensure that the Council operates in an open and transparent manner
- The information may be of interest to some members of the public

And the following factors in favour of withholding the information:

- Councillors need a safe space to enable them to give opinions and share their views in an environment where they are free from external scrutiny

- Councillors may not provide their views and concerns openly if they are open to disclosure
- Communication between the Councillors and their party need to be open and uninhibited and they would have a reasonable expectation that some matters would not be disclosed
- There is an overriding public interest in the Councillors being able to conduct free and frank discussions to ensure informed decision making

The Qualified Person has considered the importance of openness, accountability and transparency but does not consider that this counter balances the prejudice which they deem likely to occur. On balance, we do not consider that the public interest outweighs the need to protect against the risk of prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs at this time and therefore will not be providing the information.

City of Doncaster Council estimates that it has cost £49 to respond to this request for information.

Reviewing any decisions made:

If you are not happy with this reply you can ask us to review our response. To do this write to us within 40 working days of receiving your response at the address below or email FOIAppeals@doncaster.gov.uk

If you do not agree with the review decision you can apply to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision about our compliance or otherwise with the Freedom of Information legislation. Contact details for the ICO are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. www.ico.org.uk Telephone 0303 123 1113.

Many thanks
Ellen Dook

Information Governance Officer
Corporate Resources
City of Doncaster Council

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