

Date: 15/11/19
Our Ref: RFI2832
Your Ref: FOI Request – Pennine Lancashire Empty Homes Programme
Tel: 0300 1234 500
Email: foi@homesengland.gov.uk



Homes
England

██████████
By Email Only

Windsor House
Homes England – 6th Floor
50 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0TL

Dear ██████████

RE: Request for Information – RFI2832

Thank you for your request for information, which was processed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

For clarification, you requested the following information:

As a result of the failed HCA / AAW Ltd / Rossendale Council 'Pennine Lancashire Empty Homes Programme', how many vulnerable tenants were identified by yourselves and Rossendale Council in AAW Ltd properties at the time of their collapse/bankruptcy and how many were offered housing support / advice following the legal limbo they were left in? Did AAW Ltd / Rossendale Council receive any bonuses for meeting certain H.C.A. Empty Homes project targets? If so, how much, when and what for? Are you aware of any safeguarding measures / emergency housing that Rossendale Council facilitated for the tenants affected? Please provide any documentation to support this.

Please provide all documentation / communications that H.C.A. / Homes England / Rossendale Council have provided to tenants/partners regarding the situation with AAW Ltd and any affiliated audits / environmental health reports on the properties in question. Please redact any personal information such as names so that this FOI request complies with the legislation.

Please also provide all correspondence (including but not limited to emails/letters/memos/minutes of meetings etc) with Rossendale Council regarding the failed 'Pennine Lancashire Empty Homes Programme' and/or AAW Ltd /Safe-Lets/Empty Homes Scheme. Are there any efforts from H.C.A / Homes England to retrieve the missing funds from Rossendale Council / AAW Ltd / ?

Please provide me with a copy of any internal investigation / reports concerning the missing £5.6 million Homes and Communities Agency 'Empty Homes' Funds which was supposedly being investigated by Lancashire Constabulary:

Rossendale Council stated: "We set up an internal project team, secured the properties and identified any vulnerable tenants and protected them. We are still analysing what the financial impact will be to the council and we are undertaking a full investigation into what happened – especially around the management of the contract". Please can you provide me with a copy of any correspondence regarding any investigation from Rossendale Council and/or Lancashire Constabulary/ Action Fraud, or any external audit.

A Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) spokesman was quoted as having said: "We are meeting regularly with Rossendale and understand that a review is currently under way and this process is being managed internally". Please can you provide me with the exact dates and times of these meetings, who attended, what was mentioned and a copy of the review.

Are you aware of any outcome from the police investigation? If so, please provide us with the most recent feedback from Lancashire Constabulary.

OFFICIAL

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Response

Homes England can confirm it holds information in scope of your request however, to comply with your request would exceed the appropriate limit for the cost of compliance. We therefore rely on section 12, exemption where the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit under the FOIA.

The full text of the legislation can be found on the following link;

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents>

Section 12 - Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

We have considered the current wording of your request and in its current scope we have determined that to establish where all elements of the information is held, to locate the information, retrieving the information and extracting the information would exceed the appropriate limit in terms of timeframes.

Under the terms of the Act we are not obliged to provide any information compiled in the course of our searches prior to concluding section 12 is engaged.

In compliance with the Section 45 Code of Practice and to offer advice and assistance under Section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, you may wish to consider narrowing the scope of your request. You might wish to do this by narrowing your request to a specified time frame and/or to a smaller scope of information; i.e. just correspondence or reports, etc.

Please note that due to the broad scope of your request we cannot confirm that any further request would not also exceed the section 12 cost limit at this time.

Right to Appeal

If you are not happy with the information that has been provided or the way in which your request has been handled you may request an internal review by writing to;

The Information Access Team
Homes England – 6th Floor
Windsor House
50 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0TL

Or by email to foi@homesengland.gov.uk

You may also complain to the Information Commissioner however, the Information Commissioner does usually expect the internal review procedure to be exhausted in the first instance.

The Information Commissioner's details can be found via the following link;

<https://ico.org.uk/>

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Please note that the contents of your request and this response are also subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Homes England may be required to disclose your request and our response accordingly.

Yours sincerely,

Information Access Team

For Homes England