**Reference: 2026-057**

Thank you for your email in which you requested the following information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA):

**1. Whether the Serious Fraud Office received, at any point between 1 March 2021 and 27 June 2026, any:**
**a. Formal referral or pre-acceptance enquiry;**
**b. Notification, briefing, or intelligence package;**
**c. Request for joint working or specialist support; from any of: the Metropolitan Police Service (any unit, including North Area Basic Command Unit, Economic Crime Command, or Specialist Crime); the National Crime Agency or National Economic Crime Centre; the Crown Prosecution Service; the London Borough of Haringey or any of its officers, members, or commissioned advisers; any other public authority or third party; in connection with the property transactions referenced above (including without limitation the matters reviewed in the Chris Buss independent report of April 2023).**

**2. If yes to question 1:**
**a. The number of such referrals, notifications, or requests received, broken down by source (Met / NCA / CPS / Haringey / other).**
**b. The date(s) on which each was received.**
**c. The route by which each was received (e.g. SFO's Intelligence Division / Case Selection Panel, Director's office, other).**
**d. The disposal of each — i.e. (i) accepted for SFO investigation, (ii) declined and returned to the referring agency, (iii) referred onwards to another agency, (iv) closed without disposal, (v) other (please specify category).**
**e. The date(s) on which any such disposal was communicated.**
**f. The published criteria or grounds on which the disposal was decided.**
**g. Whether any of the matters referred remain open, under consideration, or have been re-opened as at the date of this request.**

**3. The Serious Fraud Office's published Statement of Principles, case-acceptance criteria, or equivalent guidance which governs the SFO's receipt and assessment of:**
**a. Referrals from territorial police forces;**
**b. Referrals from local authorities or local-authority-commissioned independent reviews;**
**in respect of suspected fraud, false accounting, bribery, or misconduct in public office concerning local-authority property transactions.**

**4. Aggregate statistics, broken down by calendar year, of referrals received by the SFO from:**
**a. Territorial police forces in England and Wales;**
**b. Local authorities in England and Wales; in respect of suspected fraud, false accounting, bribery, or misconduct in public office, between 1 January 2018 and the date of this request, together with the disposal in each year (accepted / declined / referred onwards / closed).**

**Response**
Please see below our response to your questions.

**Questions 1, 2**
The SFO neither confirms nor denies whether it holds information falling within the description specified in your request. The duty in Section 1(1)(a) of the FOIA does not apply, by virtue of sections 30(3) of that Act. Nothing in my reply should be taken as an indication that the information you requested is or is not held by the SFO.

Section 30(3) provides that:
*The duty to confirm or deny does not arise in relation to information which is (or if it were held by the public authority would be) exempt information by virtue of subsection (1) or (2).*

Section 30(1) provides that:
*(1) Information held by a public authority is exempt information if it has at any time been held by the authority for the purposes of—*
*(a) any investigation which the public authority has a duty to conduct with a view to it being ascertained—*
*(i) whether a person should be charged with an offence, or*
*(ii) whether a person charged with an offence is guilty of it,*
*(b) any investigation which is conducted by the authority and in the circumstances may lead to a decision by the authority to institute criminal proceedings which the authority has power to conduct,*
*or (c) any criminal proceedings which the authority has power to conduct.*

<u>How the exemption is engaged</u>
Section 30(1) exempts any information held by a public authority if it has at any time been held by the authority for the purposes of (b) any investigation which is conducted by the authority, and in the circumstances may lead to a decision by the authority to institute criminal proceedings which the authority has power to conduct.

Section 30(3) allows the respondent to “neither confirm nor deny” whether any information is held in relation to the question where the requested information, if held, is described by section 30(1).

It is clear that your question relates to information that you believe may be held by the SFO for the purposes of criminal investigations, as set out in section 30(1)(b), meaning the SFO must neither confirm nor deny whether the information is held in accordance with S30 of the FOIA (2000).

<u>Public interest test</u>
Sections 30(3) is a qualified exemption and requires consideration of whether, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exclusion of the duty to confirm or deny outweighs the public interest in disclosing whether the public authority holds the information. More information about exemptions in general and the public interest test is available on the ICO’s website at www.ico.org.uk

It is recognised that there is a general public interest in publicising the work of the SFO, so that the public knows that serious fraud, bribery and corruption are being investigated and prosecuted effectively and so that the public can be reassured about the general conduct of our organisation and how public money is spent. The SFO takes steps to meet this interest by publishing casework information on its website where appropriate.

However, it is also recognised that it is in the public interest to safeguard the investigative process and that investigating bodies should be afforded the space to determine the course of any investigation. On some occasions, releasing information about what is held or not held by law enforcement bodies would be detrimental to that process. To confirm or deny whether the information you have requested is held (if held) would, for reasons outlined earlier, be likely to prejudice the SFO's conduct of any criminal investigation/ability to tackle and prevent serious crime. This would not be in the public interest as the right of access to information should not undermine the investigation and prosecution of criminal matters.

Having considered the opposing arguments, it is clear that the benefits of confirming whether or not the information is held are outweighed by the disbenefits and thus the public interest favours maintaining the exclusion of the duty to confirm or deny whether information is held.

**Question 3**
For the SFO Statement of Principle, please see the information on this link: SFO Statement of Principle - GOV.UK.

All referrals received by the SFO are subject to an intelligence assessment process. Cases are only accepted for investigation (i.e. progress from intelligence to the casework stage) when they meet the criteria set out in the Director's Statement of Principle and the Code for Crown Prosecutors: The Code for Crown Prosecutors | The Crown Prosecution Service.

Information on our reporting procedures and the regulatory framework within which we operate, is available at the following links:

- SFO Reporting Portal.
- Guidance and regulation - GOV.UK

**Question 4**
You may find the information organised by financial year on the SFO website in our Annual Reports and Accounts (ARA) here:
SFO Annual Report and Accounts - GOV.UK

For information from previous years, please visit the National Archive website: Archive Timeline - UK Government Web Archive.