The Electoral Commission

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Sent via email: [redacted]

10 November 2022

Dear [redacted],

Internal review of FOI request FOI 077-22

Thank you for your email to FOI@electoralcommssion.org.uk of 19 October 22 seeking an internal review of your request for information, reference number **FOI 077-22**.

In seeking an internal review, you made the following comments:

Please review if you hold this data.

Outcome of your internal review:

We do not hold the information you have requested.

There are two separate spending and reporting regimes for UK Parliamentary General Elections (UKPGE). Each party is required to report its spending promoting the party to the Commission whilst each candidate is required to report spending that promoted them as candidates, to the Returning Officer in the constituency.

The Commission holds spending data reported to it by each party for all UKPGEs since 2001. When reporting to us, each party delivers a single spending return which includes invoices and/or receipts for most items of expenditure. There is no requirement for a party to identify spending geographically, other than by nations, i.e. England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The invoices and receipts may include the geographical address of the supplier, but this does not necessarily mean that the money was spent in a specific constituency or ward. It is not, therefore, possible to reliably identify spending in specific constituencies or wards from the data and we do not therefore hold the specific information you have requested.

The party spending information we hold is accessible to you through the Electoral Commission's public search site and can be found here. This link is to a search we have pre-refined for you to all UKPGEs since 2001. You can download the information from the search site as a CSV file, which will allow for the data to be analysed or refined using a spreadsheet.

In addition to the party expenditure, each candidate is required to report spending that promoted them as candidates, to the Returning Officer in the constituency. The Commission publishes the data on our website, which you can find here: 2019 UK Parliamentary general election candidate spending | Electoral Commission. This data can also be downloaded.

This webpage includes the data for 2015 and 2017 UKPGEs, but published in spreadsheet form rather than the tool we introduced for the 2019 UKPGE. The data can still be downloaded however, in Excel or CSV format.

The spending reported by candidates is specific to the constituency in which they stood but does not take account of any spending by the party in that constituency under the separate regime. The candidate spending figure therefore provides part of the picture, but not the full picture. And because the party spending cannot reliably be broken down by constituency, it is not possible to identify the full picture.

In terms of local government elections, there is no requirement for parties to provide spending returns for these elections, and we do not hold the relevant candidate spending data either. Returning Officers are required to retain the returns only for 2 years after the date of an election, so are unlikely to have retained those for any election prior to 2020.

Having undertaken the review, I am satisfied that interpretation was reasonable and that the response was appropriate.

I have completed this review because I am a member of the Electoral Commission's management team, and I was not previously involved in the original response to your request.

If you remain dissatisfied with our response, you can appeal to the Information Commissioner at: The ICO, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. For further details about the appeal procedure please visit www.ico.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Binnie Goh

General Counsel
The Electoral Commission