

Waltham Forest Town Hall, Forest Road, Walthamstow, E17 4JF

Ms J Wright
[...]

Ask for: Daniel Fenwick
Email: Daniel.fenwick@walthamforest.gov.uk
Direct line: 020 8496 4881
Date: 21st January 2008

Dear Ms Wright,

Your query by email dated 6th December 2007

I write as the Council's Acting Monitoring Officer and in response to your email of 6th December 2007 entitled 'Lorna Lee's Promotion' to Cllr. Loakes. In the absence of Satish Mistry, I am responsible for monitoring the legality of the Council's actions and reply on the Council's behalf.

It is simplest to repeat your query here:

Dear Cllr Loakes,

I have read the council's briefing about Lorna Lee's promotion with amazement. It states that Ms Lee was promoted to grade 10 in January 2006 and held that position until being promoted to grade 11 in April 2007.

Yet when I wrote to you in February 2007, asking how much she earned, your response via the council's Corporate Legal Services, under the Freedom of Information Act, was that Ms Lee was on grade 8. This response was not a hasty off-the-cuff reply. It was sent to me on 15 March 2007, a month after I had emailed you, giving you plenty of time to ascertain the facts.

I can hardly believe that a letter sent on behalf of the leader of a council, by the council's Corporate Legal Services, could give the wrong answer to a precise and simple question.

Can you now confirm that the information given in your reply in March was true? I look forward to hearing from you very soon. Incidentally, this is not a press query; I am asking as a resident of Walthamstow.



The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) request and response referred to were as follows:

1. How much is the director of museums paid, and what are this person's duties? The council has responsibility for just two museums, which both have dedicated staff. Managing them cannot warrant a full-time position.

I can confirm that the pay scale for the post of director of museums is PO8 (£42,459 - £45,048) .The duties of the director of museums include management of both facilities including overall responsibility for collection, development and care, visitor development, working with internal and external partners, managing the budget, staff development and contributing to the wider delivery of cultural services in the Borough.

My response is based on information provided to me by the Adults & Community Services Directorate, the freedom of information request file relating to your request and the Council's own procedures.

First, the information provided in the FOI response is correct, although the post is correctly titled Head of the Museum, Gallery and Archive Service. It is also correct that this was the post held by Ms Lee up to January 2006 and formally remained a post within the Council's structure until May 2007.

However, from January 2006 Ms Lee undertook the additional duties of managing the work of a temporary improvement team located within Culture and Leisure Services. For this additional work, she received an honorarium that increased her grade to PO10. The honorarium, however, did not alter the grade of the post of Head of the Museum, Gallery and Archive Service, which remained graded at PO8. The position was that the person performing the post was also undertaking additional duties and therefore being paid at a higher rate.

Second, I am satisfied that this explains the difference between the FOI response – which asks for the grade of a post in the Council's structure – and the press statement which gave details of the pay received by an individual, which took into account all duties undertaken by her and for which she received payment.

Third, I accept it may have assisted you if the Council explained the position better to you when responding to your FOI request, particularly as you (understandably) did not know the full remit or title of the post in your request was wider than just "the 2 museums", as you put it. This may have avoided confusion at the later date and I will raise this with my team. We do try our best to accommodate requests and queries, in the future, if you are in any doubt about the clarity of a response, please contact the relevant person as soon as possible.

Finally, I must apologise personally to you for my delay in replying to you. I much appreciate your patience in awaiting a response from the Council. I now consider this matter closed but you are of course free to make any further FOI requests.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Fenwick
Acting Director of Governance & Law
And Acting Monitoring Officer

Cc: Mimi Konisberg – Executive Director, Adults & Community Services
Clive Morton – Head of Cultural Services
Kim Lok – Information Officer
Joanne Hood – Executive Support Officer, Leaders Office