Dear ███████

Thank you for your information request of 13 October 2017. Aberdeen City Council (ACC) has completed the necessary search for the information requested.

For the financial years 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 (and giving individual figures for each year), please tell me how much of council funds was paid to outside agencies or private sector contractors for the provision of any council services - to put this another way, what was the total value of services commissioned by the council, and therefore not provided by the council's own employees?
Please see below:

2014-15: £134,205,044
2015-16: £137,350,376
2016-17: £143,201,145

Please note that the above represents the figures coded to account codes within the grouping of Commissioned Services. Within the account grouping of Administration and Supplies and Services, costs there may be for example within codes such as Courses, expenditure on buying a place on a course organised by an external organisation, materials for courses provided in house by council staff and also expenditure on commissioning an external organisation to deliver a training course for ACC staff. Quantification of the commissioned services element of Admin/Supplies would require examination of a large number of invoices which may have a high staff cost and not produce a figure that is material in relation to the figures above.

How much was spent, or what was the total cost to the council or services provided in-house (not by an external contractor) for each financial year.
Please see below:

2014-15: £970,819,941
2015-16: £990,220,209
2016-17: £983,560,181

Please note that the figures above represent total Gross Expenditure for the Council less the cost of Commissioned Services in the question above.

What was the council's full budget for each financial year?
Please see below:

Commissioned Services Budget

2014-15: £133,621,419
2015-16: £135,049,637

2016-17: £136,484,945

For the year 2016-17 only, please provide a list of all external contractors for the provision of council services and how much was paid to, or invoiced to each.
ACC is unable to provide you with how much was to or invoiced to each external contractor as this information is deemed to be commercially sensitive.

ACC is unable to provide you with information on **for the year 2016-17, how much was paid to or invoiced to each external contractor for the provision of council services** as it is exempt from disclosure. In order to comply with its obligations under the terms of Section 16 of the FOISA, ACC hereby gives notice that we are refusing your request under the terms of Section 33(1)(b) – Commercial Interests - of the FOISA.

In making this decision ACC considered the following points:

<u>Do commercial interests exist in relation to the information?</u>
Yes, the request relates to the commercial interests of the suppliers of services which are bought by ACC in a competitive environment.

Suppliers may either bid for a contract or quote for one off or a short term supply. ACC is expected to achieve best value by competitive tendering or obtaining 4 quotes for a purchase. Certain services supplied to ACC are very specialised and there may only be a small number of suppliers operating in the Aberdeen market and they would be known to each other.

<u>Please describe how disclosure of the requested information would cause the level of harm required for this exemption</u>
There is a high probability that disclosure of the requested information would damage the commercial interests of the suppliers, as competing suppliers may find out the amount paid to a competitor in 2016/17 which may be useful in tendering in 2017/18 or subsequent years.

<u>Where does the public interest lie in relation to the information?</u>
ACC recognises that there is a general public interest in knowing the exact amount of money ACC pays each provider for the services ACC commissions. However, ACC is of the view that the public interest lies in withholding the information as disclosure would prejudice ACC's commercial relationships and future contractual negotiations with third parties and after considering all the circumstances of the case, the public interest is best met by applying Section 33(1)(b) at this time.

Does the council have a policy to refer to service users as customers, clients, residents, taxpayers, or otherwise, in its documentation and web material? Please specify which.
ACC has no documented policy advising its employees that they must refer to members of the public as service users, customers, clients, residents, taxpayers, or otherwise, in its documentation and/or web material.

Depending on the service being delivered, the Council may have used one or all of the above designations, at some time, to refer to members of the public in its documentation and/or web material.

Currently, to create consistency in areas of organisation-wide strategy and communication, ACC typically uses the designation 'customer' to refer to the breadth of individuals that utilise its wide range of services, believing it is all encompassing. This is applied both internally as well as externally.

We hope this helps with your request.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Buchan
Information Compliance Officer

INFORMATION ABOUT THE HANDLING OF YOUR REQUEST

ACC handled your request for information in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Please refer to the attached PDF for more information about your rights under FOISA.

Information Compliance Team
Customer Service
Corporate Governance
Aberdeen City Council
3rd Floor North
Business Hub 17
Marischal College
Broad Street
ABERDEEN AB10 1AQ

foienquiries@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Tel 03000 200 292

*03000 numbers are free to call if you have 'free minutes' included in your mobile call plan.
Calls from BT landlines will be charged at the local call rate of 10.24p per minute (the same as 01224s).

www.aberdeencity.gov.uk