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Xxxxxxx Xxxxxxx

Our reference: FOICR 9902/08

Date: 05 September 2008

Dear Xxxxxxx

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Thank you for your e-mail of 7 August in which you ask a number of questions in relation to the processes and administration costs of the General Register Office.

As from 1 April 2008, General Register Office (GRO) became part of the Identity and Passport Service (IPS).

IPS is an Executive Agency of the Home Office, and is responsible for handling passport applications from UK Nationals and in the future, the issue of Identity Cards. It employs over 3,500 staff at various locations around the UK.

I am pleased to be able to disclose the information that you requested to you.

1. On what date did Royal Mail introduce A4 and A5 pricing to the GRO?

Royal Mail introduced 'Pricing in Proportion' on the 21st of August 2006.

2. In the year prior to that change, how many certificates were posted by the GRO?

During the financial year 2005-2006, the General Register Office despatched 1,640,479 certificates.

3. How many A4 envelopes were used for part (2)?



During the financial year 2005-2006, the General Register Office used 745,672 envelopes. This is based on an average 2.2 certificates per piece of mail

4. What was the cost of these envelopes?

The cost of A4 envelopes is £27.10 per 1000 envelopes. However, the price is variable and is dependent on the order amount.

5. What was the cost of posting these envelopes?

At that time Royal Mail charged £0.30 per item.

6. In the year following the postage changes, how many certificates were posted by the GRO?

During the financial year 2006-2007, the General Register Office despatched 2,052,109 certificates.

7. How many A5 envelopes were used for part (6)?

During the financial year 2006-2007, the majority of certificates were despatched in A4 envelopes via TNT postal service. It was not until the 01/09/07 that GRO started to use A5 envelopes and reverted back to Royal Mail.

8. What was the cost of these envelopes?

The cost of A4 envelopes is £27.10 per 1000 envelopes and the cost of A5 envelopes is £16.37 per 1000 envelopes. However, the price is variable and is dependent on the order amount.

9. What was the cost of posting these envelopes?

The cost of posting the A4 envelopes was £0.255 per item via TNT. Under pricing in proportion Royal Mail had increased their charge for A4 size mail to £0.41/item.

10. Has the GRO approached any other mail provider to quote for postage services?

Yes.

11. if so:

(i) whom was contacted?

TNT and UK Mail.

(ii) when

The contract went through a formal tender process (a requirement for all government contracts) in March 2007.



(iii) what was the price

UK mail dropped out of the tender process. TNT price was £0.255/item

(iv) why was the service not secured

TNT charged a higher price (£0.255) than Royal Mail (£0.198) despite having the same delivery timescale.

12. and if not, why not?

N/A

13. How is the £7 cost for a certificate broke-down?

The £7.00 for a certificate is a statutory fee.

14. In the same year as part (6), how many sheets of paper were used for certificates by the GRO?

2.7 million sheets of paper were used by GRO

15. How much did this paper cost?

The paper costs approximately £10,500

16. How are the certificates printed?

The certificates are produced by an external supplier and GRO print the event types onto the certificate.

17. If for example by laser printer:

(i) what model printer is used

The Office uses a combination of HP LaserJet 2300L, HP LaserJet P3005 and HP LaserJet 1320tn.

(ii) how much did the GRO spent on toner that year?

(iii) If by another method, please state the method and model of machine used, plus

(iv) ink costs.

We are unable to provide this information in isolation as the costs incurred are corporate and we do not have a breakdown for the business area.

18. What is the process of issuing a certificate?

On receipt of an application, if no GRO index reference has been supplied we undertake a search in our records to obtain the information. If a GRO index reference has been quoted we identify the entry and produce the certificate from the information supplied. If an entry cannot be found a supervisor will either have the



GRO reference rechecked in the year/quarter provided – if found a certificate will be produced and despatched. If the entry is not found a refund will be processed and an explanation sent. When a certificate is produced it will be posted in a C5 envelope using a standard postal service.

19. What parts of that process are:

(i) automated,

If the entry applied for is on a digitised record - the system will automatically match it to the correct image. Only historic Births (1837-1934) and death records (1837-1957) have been digitised. All other events are on microfilm tapes.

(ii) require human intervention?

All applications are manually inputted onto CRM.

If an entry is not on the CRM system – The tape containing the entry relating to the customers application details is manually pulled from the Linfiles.

An operator uses a scanner to locate the correct entry on the tape.

Once the image has been located the operator uses Cosmographic software to enhance the image and mask it off for print.

Once a certificate has been produced they are sent to despatch were a member of staff folds and places the certificate in a C5 envelope ready to be posted.

If a certificate can not be located - all refunds are manually processed by a member of staff.

20. How long does it take for a person to perform the tasks in part 19(ii)?

The process time for producing a certificate, when the customer has provided the correct GRO reference on the application form, is 10 minutes.

21. What hourly rate is paid to a person undertaking the tasks in part 19(ii)?

Staffs engaged on the certificate production process are paid a starting salary of £12.397 p.a. which equates approximately to £6.44 per hour.

However if you are dissatisfied with this response you may request an independent internal review of any aspect of our handling of your application by submitting your complaint to the address below quoting reference FOICR 9902/08:

Information Rights Team
Information and Record Management Service
Home Office
4th Floor, Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
Email: info.access@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk



During the internal review the department's handling of your information request will be reassessed by members of staff who were not involved in providing you with this response.

Should you remain dissatisfied after this internal review, you will have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. The department therefore, will be simultaneously releasing to the public the information you requested together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

I hope that you find this information of interest, and would like to assure you that you have been supplied with all relevant information that the Identity and Passport Service holds.

Yours faithfully,

Xxxxx XXXXXXXXXXXX
Identity and Passport Service

