ANNEX A

FOI DOF/2026-0557

Request/Response

I can confirm that the Department of Finance (DoF) holds the information requested.

Question 1: *A copy of the Department's policy/guidance on hospitality or food provision for Department of Finance staff attending internal departmental events*

Response: *DoF Guidance on The Acceptance and Provision of Gifts and Hospitality*

Question 2: *The number of staff who attended the event in the Civil Service Pavilion on Wednesday 29th April 2026. I think these were computer staff from a branch called Digital Services. If these were not counted on the day, please state an estimate of under 50, 50-100, 100+*

Response: *Under 50*

Question 3: *The cost of the above event including room hire. If it is deemed a commercially sensitive matter, please confirm that this was a cost to the public purse and if it was under £1000, or over £1000.*

Response: *This information is considered to be exempt from release under section 43 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Commercial Interests). The Act states that ''Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would or would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the public authority holding it)''. Section 43 is a qualified exemption and is subject to a public interest test (see Annex B).*

Please see alternative answer as requested – Cost under £1000 from the department's budget.

Question 4: *Confirmation that:*

- *The Department's policy on procurement was followed correctly for the event* ***Response: Yes***
- *Several quotes were sought:* ***Response: Yes***
- *This was not a single tender.* ***Response: Yes***
- *Food was provided at the event.* ***Response: Yes***
- *There was no cost to staff themselves for food and drinks.* ***Response: Yes***

ANNEX B

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST			
Request Ref.	DoF/2026-0557		
Request summary:	Information on a business event held in the Pavillion, Stormont Estate.		
Information details:	Exemption Applied:	Disclosure	Non - Disclosure

Questions 3 of the request is being withheld.	Section 43(2) Commercial Interests.	Disclosure of the information would: • Show compliance with the FOI Act by disclosing information held by the Department as a Public Authority; • Facilitate accountability and transparency in the spending of public money; and • Promote competition in procurement through transparency.	This information relates to the cost of a single service recently obtained by the Public Sector and publicising this commercially sensitive financial data, would, or would be likely to, prejudice the service provider's commercial interests and the Departments, by diminishing the competitive advantage going forward. The disclosure of this information would or would be likely to weaken future tenders for the participants in a competitive environment by revealing sensitive market information or information of potential usefulness to future competitors in the future. There is also a risk that tenderers could be discouraged from competing for future services if the cost of this service was released. There is a public interest in ensuring that the private companies can compete on an equitable basis for public sector services and that the public sector can obtain the most cost-effective services, the disclosure of these costs could compromise the ability to do so in the future.

PUBLIC INTEREST DECISION: The Department has considered all of the relevant factors in the public interest test and has reached the conclusion that the benefit to the public in applying the exemption outweighs the public interest in releasing the information requested, because of the prejudices and losses that would potentially affect the Department and its third-party service provider.

Signed: Date: 18th September 2026

Annex C - Internal Reviews

An Internal Review request examines the response based on applied exemptions, search adequacy, or response timeliness.

It is not the following, which will be treated as specified:

- Questions asking for clarification on information provided: Will be treated as part of the original FOI request.
- Additional questions about the information in the response: Will be treated as a new FOI request.
- Questions about the subject not related to the original request: Will be treated as new FOI request.
- Questions regarding how a service operates or why a decision was made: Will be treated as normal business and responded to accordingly.
- Complaints or concerns raised in response to information provided: Will be treated in line with relevant complaints procedure.

To make an Internal Review request:

- **Clearly state**: That you want an internal review of a previous FOI response and provide the necessary details.
- **Follow the timeline:** Be sure to submit your request within 40 working days of receiving the original response. If the Department has not responded at all, you have 40 working days after the original 20-day response period has passed.
- **Wait for a response:** The review is typically completed within 20 working days but can take up to 40 working days in exceptional circumstances. The Department should inform you of any delays.

What the review includes

- A fresh decision based on a reconsideration of all relevant factors.
- An assessment of whether the request was handled correctly and if exemptions were applied appropriately.
- The review will be conducted by someone who was not involved in the original decision.

If you wish to request an internal review, please email foi@finance-ni.gov.uk or write to FOI/EIR Team, Department of Finance, 2nd Floor, Craigantlet Buildings, Stoney Road, Belfast, BT4 3SX.