

10 January 2020  
Our ref: FOI111219

Dear ,

**Re: FOI Request –technical restatement due 7 November 2019**

Thank you for your recent FOI request, which we received on 11 December 2019. We replied to some of the wider considerations of your letter on 20 December, following a prior FOI request which we replied to on 6 December. In your most recent correspondence, you requested the following:

- a) A copy of any advice, guidance or recommendation or any record of the same given (whether in writing or otherwise) by the Cabinet Secretary to the OBR with respect to the application of the Cabinet Office's General Election guidance to the OBR's proposed publication of the Restated Forecast.
- b) Any documents produced by the OBR in connection with (i) any advice, guidance or recommendation or record of the same as described at subparagraph (a) above and (ii) the OBR's decision not to publish the Restated Forecast on the basis that to do so would be inconsistent with the Cabinet Office's General Election Guidance (or for any other reason).

We have attached copies of relevant documents to this letter. The two documents are: the OBR's consideration of the application of the previous version of the General Election Guidance, and a subsequent communication from the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury of the Cabinet Secretary's view that publication was inconsistent with the 2019 General Election Guidance.

If you have any other queries about this letter, please send them to our enquiries inbox at [obr.enquiries@obr.uk](mailto:obr.enquiries@obr.uk).

Yours sincerely,

Freedom of Information Unit  
**Office for Budget Responsibility**

### **Copyright notice**

Most documents supplied in response to a Freedom of Information request continue to be protected by copyright. You are free to use these documents for your information, including for any non-commercial research you may be doing. Documents can also be used for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use, for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder. Government officials will have produced most documents supplied by the OBR and so the information will be Crown Copyright. Crown Copyright is managed by HMSO and you can find out details on the arrangements for re-using Crown Copyright on <http://www.hmso.gov.uk/copyright/licences/click-use-home.htm>

### **Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act 2000**

If you are not happy with this reply, you may request a review by writing to OBR Enquiries, Office for Budget Responsibility, 14T, 102 Petty France, London SW1H 9AJ or by email to [obr.enquiries@obr.uk](mailto:obr.enquiries@obr.uk).

Any review request must be made within 2 months of the date of this letter.

It would assist our review if you set out which aspects of the reply concern you and why you are dissatisfied.

If you are not content with the outcome your complaint, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the OBR. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

**From:** Chote, Robert  
**Sent:** 05 November 2019 10:40  
**To:** Farrington, Stephen  
**Subject:** RE: Re-statement release and pre-election guidance

Yes I do. Thanks.

---

**From:** Farrington, Stephen  
**Sent:** 05 November 2019 10:39  
**To:** Chote, Robert <Robert.Chote@obr.uk>  
**Subject:** Re-statement release and pre-election guidance

Robert,

As you set out in your letter to Tom Scholar on 29<sup>th</sup> October, following the cancellation of the Budget on 25 October, we intend to publish a technical restatement of our March forecast to reflect subsequent ONS classification and statistical changes, plus a correction to outturn corporation tax data. Consistent with our release policy, designed to demonstrate that the timing of releases is not politically influenced, this was set for 7<sup>th</sup> November.

As you know, during the evening after your letter was published, the House of Commons voted to hold a General election on 12 December, a decision confirmed a day later by the House of Lords. It now seems likely that Parliament will be dissolved on 6 November and that the formal 'pre-election period' (or 'purdah') will begin then or shortly afterwards.

In the absence to date of guidance from the Cabinet Office on announcements by public bodies during this period, I have reviewed our decision in light of the guidance releases in 2017. As this is a technical update, and does not reflect and judgements on government policy or recent developments in the economy and public finances, I believe that it would be appropriate to continue as planned. Indeed, not to proceed with a technical announcement the timing of which has already been announced would be open to the suspicion of political motivation.

Could you please confirm that you agree with this assessment?

Thanks,  
steve



**Steve Farrington**  
Chief of Staff  
14T, 102 Petty France, London, SW1H 9AJ  
E: [Stephen.farrington@obr.uk](mailto:Stephen.farrington@obr.uk)  
[www.obr.uk](http://www.obr.uk) | [twitter.com/obr\\_uk](https://twitter.com/obr_uk)

## Chote, Robert

---

**From:** Scholar, Tom - HMT <Tom.Scholar@hmtreasury.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 07 November 2019 01:29  
**To:** Chote, Robert  
**Subject:** Restated March forecast

Robert

We spoke earlier about the restated March forecast which is due to be published tomorrow.

The Cabinet Office's General Election Guidance is clear that the final decision on this is for the OBR, in consultation with the Treasury.

As I said earlier, in my view publishing this document during the election campaign would be inconsistent with the requirements of the Guidance, in particular sections K and O, with the risk that the OBR becomes involved in party political controversy, which could reflect adversely on the work or reputation of the OBR. I have consulted the Cabinet Secretary, who is of the same view.

I hope this clear position from the Cabinet Office and Treasury is helpful to you in making the final judgement on this.

With best wishes.

Tom

This email and any files transmitted with it are intended solely for the use of the individual(s) to whom they are addressed. If you are not the intended recipient and have received this email in error, please notify the sender and delete the email. This footnote also confirms that our email communications may be monitored to ensure the secure and effective operation of our systems and for other lawful purposes, and that this email has been swept for malware and viruses.