

Mr Ian Kermode
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Our ref: 3729431

21 March 2024

Dear Mr Kermode

We write further to your request, received 11 March 2024, which states:

"The Isle of Man Public Health Directorate prepared a document titled "Rapid Review Research Paper: Water fluoridation", dated December 2023. This was not released to the media or general public until 5th March 2024. Please can you confirm the following:

- 1. In April 2023 Tynwald, the IOM Parliament, ordered that Public Health prepare a research paper on issues relevant to potentially fluoridating Manx tap water. Why did it take 9 months to prepare such document, particularly one called a "Rapid Review"?**
- 2. What was the total financial cost of producing such document? (This is to include the cost in man/woman hours of IOM Government employees involved in the research and writing, any remuneration paid to external contributors and all other associated costs such as formatting, drafting, editing, proof reading and physical production).**
- 3. What was the total number of man/woman hours of IOM Government employees involved in the research and writing and production of the report?**
- 4. Were any external (i.e. non -IOM Government employees) contributors used in the writing and research and production of the document and if so what was the overall money paid to such persons/entities?**
- 5. How many persons overall were involved in the research and writing of the document?**

Please note that the above questions have previously been submitted to the DHSC who advised that the questions should be submitted to the Cabinet Office instead.

We therefore now expect substantive answers to all of the above questions. Thank you."

Our response to your request is as follows:

- 1. In April 2023 Tynwald, the IOM Parliament, ordered that Public Health prepare a research paper on issues relevant to potentially fluoridating Manx tap water. Why did it take 9 months to prepare such document, particularly one called a "Rapid Review"?**

Section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2015 (the Act) provides Isle of Man residents with the right to request information held by a public authority. As detailed in

DN2021/0001 issued by the Information Commission, "...is does not provide any right, however, to lodge nor requires a public authority to respond to, question, the provision of an opinion on a policy or other matter, confirmation or rebuttal of a statement or a "Yes/No" answer."

Part 1 of your requires any explanation as to why the rapid review took 9 months, which is not in the scope of the Act. However, in line with the duty to provide advice and assistance as set out in Section 15 of the Act, the following information is provided.

In response to the Report by the Tynwald Social Affairs Policy Review Committee, the Council of Ministers made a series of amended recommendations, which were endorsed by Tynwald, with the aim of reducing tooth decay and dental caries in children in the Isle of Man. The recommendation for Public Health to produce a research paper, stipulated that the paper should be prepared by December 2023.

Please see the following document for further information:

<https://www.tynwald.org.im/spfile?file=/business/opqp/sittings/20212026/2023-GD-0030.pdf>

When the available evidence has to be searched for, collated, critiqued, and summarized, systematic reviews are the gold standard. They are a rigorous process and therefore time consuming and would take more than the allocated time to complete. Rapid reviews follow the systematic review principles, but simplify or omit components of the process in order to produce the information in a more timely manner and was therefore considered the correct approach.

For more information on oral health in the Isle of Man and steps the Government is taking, please see:

<https://www.gov.im/about-the-government/departments/cabinet-office/public-health/health-improvement/oral-health-in-the-isle-of-man/>

2. What was the total financial cost of producing such document? (This is to include the cost in man/woman hours of IOM Government employees involved in the research and writing, any remuneration paid to external contributors and all other associated costs such as formatting, drafting, editing, proof reading and physical production).

While our aim is to provide information whenever possible, in this instance the Cabinet Office does not hold the information that you have requested. We do not hold information on hours used of existing employees at Public Health, Cabinet Office as there is no business need for this information.

No external contractors were used. Research, writing, formatting, drafting, editing, proof reading and physical production of the Rapid Review Research Paper and Report: Water Fluoridation document, was all completed by Isle of Man Government employees.

3. What was the total number of man/woman hours of IOM Government

employees involved in the research and writing and production of the report?

No external contractors were used. Information on hours used of existing employees is not held as there is no business need for collect this information.

4. Were any external (i.e. non -IOM Government employees) contributors used in the writing and research and production of the document and if so what was the overall money paid to such persons/entities?

No external contributors were used in the research, writing or production of the document.

5. How many persons overall were involved in the research and writing of the document?

This information not held.

Please quote the reference number 3729431 in any future communications.

Your right to request a review

If you are unhappy with this response to your freedom of information request, you may ask us to carry out an internal review of the response, by completing a complaint form and submitting it electronically or by delivery/post.

An electronic version of our complaint form can be found by going to our website at <https://services.gov.im/freedom-of-information/Review> . If you would like a paper version of our complaint form to be sent to you by post, please contact me and I will be happy to arrange for this. Your review request should explain why you are dissatisfied with this response, and should be made as soon as practicable. We will respond as soon as the review has been concluded.

If you are not satisfied with the result of the review, you then have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner for a decision on;

1. Whether we have responded to your request for information in accordance with Part 2 of the Freedom of Information Act 2015; or
2. Whether we are justified in refusing to give you the information requested.

In response to an application for review, the Information Commissioner may, at any time, attempt to resolve a matter by negotiation, conciliation, mediation or another form of alternative dispute resolution and will have regard to any outcome of this in making any subsequent decision.

More detailed information on your right to a review can be found on the Information Commissioner's website at www.inforights.im.

Should you have any queries concerning this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Further information about freedom of information requests can be found at www.gov.im/foi.

I will now close your request as of this date.

Yours sincerely

A dark, rectangular redaction mark covering the signature of the Administrative Officer.

Administrative Officer