



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT – INFORMATION RELEASED FROM 1 OCTOBER 2009 TO 31 MARCH 2010

A total of 38 Freedom of Information Act requests were received from 1 October 2009 to 31 March 2010. Many covered similar topics and some were not related to the work of the Supreme Court.

We provided information on a number of topics which are considered to be of wider public interest. The questions and answers are reproduced below:

The Justices' official robes

Q. What is the name of the company contracted to supply the Justices' robes, what are they made from and how much did they cost?

A. The manufacturer of the Justices' robes was Ede and Ravenscroft of Chancery Lane, London. The total cost including VAT for the 12 robes was £137,956. They have been designed specifically to last at least 50 years. The robes do not belong to the individual Justices but to the Supreme Court so that they will be passed down from Justice to Justice as individual Justice's service at the Supreme Court comes to an end.

The Justices do not wear robes while they sit in court neither do they wear wigs. This continues the practice of the Law Lords. However, the Justices recognised the need to have a robe for certain ceremonial occasions, such as the official opening of the Court, the State Opening of Parliament, the Swearing-in of new Justices and ceremonies around the beginning of the legal year. They therefore have robes which are the same shape as classic judges' robes. The design is from the Tudor period. The robes are made from black brocade with gold lace and some gold ornamentation on the sleeves with the Supreme Court emblem embroidered on the back.

Impartiality of the Justices

Q. My request concerns the financial interests of the Judges involved in the case concerning unfair bank charges. Please supply full details of the financial interests of the Judges involved in the case concerning unfair bank charges, any income or benefits they receive or expect from the banking industry/ share holding and any bank penalty charges they have paid.

A. The Supreme Court does not hold any information about the Justices' financial details. In the event that we did hold such information its release would be subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information (FOIA) and Data Protection Acts which deal with the handling and release of personal information. However, as we do not hold the information the question of release does not arise.

The Register of Interests and any declaration of interest made by Lord Phillips and the other Justices who heard the Office of Fair Trading case would be held by the House of Lords as the case was heard before the Supreme Court came into being on 1 October 2009. This is because when the Law Lords heard the case they were sitting in their role as Law Lords of the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords.

The practice adopted in the House of Lords was that, if any of the Law Lords had an interest in any case, they would abstain (recuse themselves) from participation from the case or, if they considered that the interest was not significant they would ask for a letter to be sent to the parties notifying them of the interest and asking whether the parties wished for the Law Lord to abstain (recuse themselves) from the proceedings. The same procedure applies here in the Supreme Court. These procedures are considered sufficient to ensure that the Justices act impartially in the fulfilment of their duties.

This practice was followed in the Office of Fair Trading case. The parties were informed that all of the Law Lords involved were likely to have bank accounts at and/or small shareholdings whether directly or through unit trusts or pension policies in one or more of the appellant banks. The parties were asked if they wished to object to any Law Lord sitting on the case. No objections were received.

The Justices of the Supreme Court do not have a Register of Interests. The policy on this matter is available on our website at

<http://www.supremecourt.gov.uk/about/interests-and-expenses.html>.

The Supreme Court's Guide to Judicial Conduct 2009 covers the judicial independence, impartiality, integrity, propriety and competence and diligence standards which apply to all Justices of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom. This document is available on our website at <http://www.supremecourt.gov.uk/about/conduct-and-complaints.html>

Table of precedence for the Justices

Q. Where within the table of precedence for the UK are the President, Deputy President and the Supreme Court Justices placed? Prior to the establishment of the Supreme Court, Lords of Appeal in Ordinary were ranked immediately below the Vice Chancellor of the Chancery Division of the High Court of Justice (under the provisions of the Administration of Justice Act of 1920) and were ranked immediately above High Court Judges.

A. In the table of precedence the President of the Supreme Court is placed in order immediately after the Speaker of the House of Lords. The Deputy President is placed in order immediately after the Master of the Rolls and the Justices are placed immediately after the Deputy President.