

24 February 2009

Veto of the publication of minutes of key Cabinet meetings

Richard Thomas, Information Commissioner, said:

“My Decision to order disclosure of the Cabinet minutes was made under the Freedom of Information Act on public interest grounds. It was upheld by the Information Tribunal. It was made clear by the Tribunal and by me that this was an exceptional case.

“The government has chosen not to appeal the Tribunal’s decision to the High Court, but instead has exercised its right of veto under the FOI Act. However, it is vital that this is also an exceptional response. Anything other than exceptional use of the veto would threaten to undermine much of the progress made towards greater openness and transparency in government since the FOI Act came into force.

“I shall be studying the text of the Secretary of State’s Certificate and Statement of Reasons which I received today. Using the power available to me under section 49(2) of the Freedom of Information Act, I will shortly lay a report before Parliament to record the circumstances leading to this outcome. This will be in line with previous commitments I have made and the interest shown by past Select Committees in the potential use of the veto.”

For all media enquires, please contact the ICO press office on 0207 025 7580.