FOI Specialist Martin Rosenbaum has analysed ICO decision notices from the previous two years and discovered a litany of complaints and criticism directed against bodies at the heart of the government. Mr Rosenbaum concluded his research by speculating whether Information Commissioner Elizabeth Denham is being tough enough in her approach to enforcing the law.

‘Poor’, ‘disappointing’ and ‘unacceptable’ were just some of the descriptions of the treatment of FOI applications by the Home Office, the Ministry of Justice and the Cabinet Office.

The Cabinet Office and the Home Office were identified as having the worst record of failure on timely cooperation in the country. The two departments accounted for more than half of the number of Information Notices (Commissioner’s enforcement tool, reserved for particularly uncooperative bodies) issued by the ICO in the period. Since May 2015, the regulator has issued 50 such notices, with 15 going against the Cabinet Office and 11 against the Home Office. Mr Rosenbaum said: “As the department responsible both for FOI policy and for civil service efficiency, the Cabinet Office should surely be setting a good example to the rest of Whitehall.”

In dozens of instances, the Commissioner condemned the Cabinet Office’s slow responses.

In one case involving files on the UK’s historical relations with India, the ICO’s decision accused...