

Date: 11th April 2024
Our ref: FOI/24/012072/X

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: FOI/24/012072/X

I write in connection with your request for information dated 05/02/2024, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

Revised from closed GSA 01/FOI/23/011605/F

- a) Please provide the number of how many registered Dog Legislation Officers (DLO) are employed by the force.***
- b) Please provide information on how many examinations of dogs have been performed by the DLOs under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1989 for every calendar month since January 2021 - 5/1/24***
- c) How many of the examinations done by DLOs to determine if a dog was a banned breed (the answer to question B) resulted in a decision that the animal was of a banned type?***
- d) How many dogs have been seized and destroyed by the force under the Dangerous Dogs Act for 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 2023 & 2024 so far? Please provide a number for the amount of seizures, and a separate figure for the number of destructions.***
- e) How many of the dogs destroyed in answer to question D were classified as being of banned types? (Pitbull, Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino, Fila Brasileiro)***

Result of Searches

Following receipt of your request searches were conducted within Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to locate the requested information and I can confirm the information requested is held by GMP. However, I am not obliged to provide the information requested as exemption applies.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Greater Manchester Police, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you, the applicant, with a notice which: (a) states that fact, (b) specifies the exemption in question and (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

Question A has been exempted from disclosure by virtue of the following exemption:

Section 31(1)(a)(b) – Law enforcement

Section 31 is a qualified and prejudice-based exemption and as such, subject to a harm and public interest test.

Harm

Disclosure of the number of Police Officers and staff in specific areas of policing reveals tactical capability and vulnerabilities from force to force and would compromise the efficient and effective conduct of Greater Manchester Police. To disclose operational strength would hinder Greater Manchester Police in law enforcement capabilities.

The safety of the public is of a paramount importance to Greater Manchester Police and to release the number of specially trained police officers would compromise the safety of the public that Greater Manchester Police serve to protect.

Furthermore, this would impact on the law enforcement capabilities of Greater Manchester Police in the prevention and detection of crime and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders. This would also give an advantage to those intent on committing crimes and avoid detection.

Factors in favour of disclosure

To disclose how many specialist roles there are within this area of policing would show accountability of Greater Manchester Police in performing a key policing function. Disclosure would encourage public awareness and debate and may reduce crime or lead to more information being provided to Greater Manchester Police from the public for the prevention and detection of crime. Disclosure could be seen how Greater Manchester Police are using its resources to prevent crime.

Furthermore, there is always a need to disclose information which relates to the spending of public money. It is in the public's interest to see how resources are balanced across Greater Manchester Police.

Factors against disclosure

To disclose details of the number of trained Dog Legislation Officers would compromise the efficient and effective conduct of the force, especially the force's future law enforcement tactics being compromised. The safety of the public is of paramount importance to Greater Manchester Police and to release the requested information would compromise the safety of the community that Greater Manchester Police serve to protect and place individuals at risk.

Disclosure would lead to a greater impact on police resources, in that this could hinder the prevention and detection of crime and more crime being committed. It would give advantage to those individuals intent on criminal activity as it may assist potential criminals in evading the police as more vulnerable areas of lower policing levels would become evident. A fear of crime will be realised as criminals identify vulnerable areas and target and exploit these areas resulting in the public being in fear of more criminal activity occurring.

Balancing Test

When balancing the public interest Greater Manchester Police has to consider whether the information should be released into the public domain. Arguments need to be weighed against each other. The most persuasive reason for disclosing the information would be Greater Manchester Police's accountability. This needs to be weighed against the strongest reason for non-disclosure which is the police service is charged with enforcing the law; preventing and detecting crime and protecting the people/communities we serve.

In this case this is the fact that individuals may be placed at risk and the affect it may have on the prevention and detection of crime. In this case, I believe the case for disclosure is not made out.

The police will not divulge any information that would place the safety of an individual at risk or undermine law enforcement. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of policing, and in this case providing assurance that the police service is appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat posed by criminal activity, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the tactical resource capability which could highlight which forces are focussing more on this type of investigation than other force areas.

In accordance with the Act, this letter represents a Refusal Notice for the particular piece of information

Response to Remaining Questions

Question A – Exempt please see above

Question B

Year	Total
2021	22
2022	83
2023	117
Jan/Feb 2024	100

Question C - Answer to how many confirmed contrary to section 1 as follows;

Year	Total
2021	7
2022	19
2023	25
Jan/Feb 2024	59

Question D - Number of dogs seized by the force for offences contrary to section 1 and 3 DDA 1991 as follows;

Year	Total
2019	113
2020	79
2021	84
2022	233
2023	368
Jan/Feb 2024	152

Number of dogs destroyed following seizures for offences contrary to section 1 and 3 DDA 1991 as follows;

Year	Total
2019	47
2020	32
2021	26
2022	96
2023	123

Question E - Number of dogs confirmed contrary to section 1 DDA that were destroyed by year.

Year	Total
2019	6
2020	3
2021	3
2022	7
2023	9
Jan/Feb 2024	36

Please note the figures for 2024 are fluid in respect of dogs confirmed `of type` either Pit Bull Terrier or XL Bullies due to many assessments outstanding. The numbers of dogs then destroyed identified `of type` will also change.

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