



Date: 22/02/2024
Our ref: 01/FOI/23/011846/U

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/23/011846/U

I write in connection with your request for information dated 26/12/2024, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

I am looking for information regarding your Front line Policing (NPT, RTPC, DSU) and Specialist Operations divisions(Armed Police, Drones etc) . How many staff are employed for each role across a Borough e.g How many inspectors based out of Ashton for NPT, how many SGT's based out of Force Headquarters. Are you also able to provide a new fleet sheet for the 2023/2024 year.?

I also note your clarification, dated 03/01/2024:

To clarify my FOI request here is the following:

Front line Policing:
Neighbourhood Policing Team
Roads Policing
Dog Support Unit
Criminal Investigation Department

Specialist Operations:
Counter Terrorism Specialist firearms officers
Tactical Firearms Unit

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 supply you with the information held as exemptions apply.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Greater Manchester Police, when refusing to provide such information (because this 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.

*The information you have requested in questions 1 and 3 is exempt 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.

S31(1) - Evidence of Harm

A Freedom of Information Act request is not a private transaction. Both the request itself and any information disclosed, are considered suitable for open publication. This is because under the Act, any information disclosed is released into the wider public domain, effectively to the world, not just to an individual.

Whilst not questioning the motives of the applicant, providing any further information relating to specific departments and functions within Greater Manchester Police would reveal our operational capability, which would be of intelligence value to criminals.

Disclosure of resources at the police's disposal, will mean that those members of the public who are committing crimes and pose a risk to the public, would be able to formulate ways to circumvent or overwhelm the police. If disclosed the tactics used by GMP will become less effective and will mean that the police are not able to detect and prevent crime, apprehend, or prosecute offenders or to administer justice for the wider community.

There is always a duty of care to the general public and the Police Service has a clear responsibility to ensure the prevention or detection of crime, and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders is always delivered. There are several tactics available to the Police Service to ensure the effective delivery of operational law enforcement. In this case, specialist policing activity is required to undertake fair investigations where it may be necessary to progress a range of reasonable lines of enquiry.

Furthermore, Disclosure of full information on fleet could be of intelligence value to a person or persons with criminal or malicious intent. Full disclosure could provide and enable targeted malicious actions, be that some form of attack on an operational unit or avoiding that unit for example where strengths and weakness may be perceived (whether incorrectly or not). Additionally, law enforcement tactics and operational capability would be compromised with the disclosure fleet details requested such as that relating to unmarked cars, as those who wish to commit criminal acts will be more aware of what vehicles may belong to the force in a covert role, that assist with preventing and detecting crime. To disclose details of fleet could

cause harm to the Police Service's ability to protect the public it serves and could prejudice its ability to perform core functions such as the prevention and detection of crime. Releasing this data would give individuals with criminal intent the intelligence required to disrupt Police activity. Criminals would be able to identify in which force areas resources are weak and use this knowledge to their advantage in furthering criminal activity around the county and the country as a whole. The disclosure of information which is likely to undermine the Police Service's ability to serve the public in preventing and detecting crime and the apprehension and prosecution of offenders can only be considered as being harmful to the public.

As such, the disclosure of any further information which would hinder the forces law enforcement functions cannot be in the public interest.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure for S31 - Where public funds are being spent, there is a public interest in accountability and justifying the use of public money. Disclosure of the requested information would enable the public to assess whether the force has appropriately taken steps to help reduce and detect crime by such means as allocating resources to geographic areas. Release would enhance public debate as to whether the force is appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat posed by criminals.

There is a legitimate public interest in the public being satisfied that the Police force has up to date and well maintained vehicles to deliver services to the public when and where required. It would also adhere to the general principle of openness and transparency and better inform the public about how public funds are spend, better awareness which may reduce crime or lead to more information from the public.

Factors against disclosure for S31 - Disclosure that reveals our operational capabilities would compromise law enforcement tactics. Criminals could use the information to target areas of weakness knowing that their activities are less likely to be detected. It may be used by criminals who are intent on pursuing their criminal activity, to identify and exploit the limitations of these resources.

To release information relating to operational capacity and capability utilised for answering emergency calls would have a detrimental effect on our policing capabilities. Therefore, to mitigate any risks, disclosure of this information needs to be protected, to ensure that those with intent to do so cannot manipulate it or undermine its purpose in any way.

Any disclosure of information which would compromise law enforcement tactics and thus lead to more crime being committed by reducing the opportunity for the prevention and detection of crime, would therefore increase the risk to public safety, which is not in the public interest.

The Police service has a duty to deliver effective law enforcement ensuring that the prevention and detection of crime, apprehension or prosecution of offenders and administration of justice is carried out appropriately. Disclosing any information relating to vehicles for specific roles, such as custody vans and traffic policing vehicles may reveal what resources are available for a given role and this information could enable police strength to be determined and circumvented by those intent on committing crime. The release of this information could therefore provide a tactical advantage to offenders which would negatively impact on public safety and undermine the policing purpose. Any disclosure of information which is likely to

undermine the Police Service's ability to serve the public in preventing and detecting crime can only be considered as being harmful to the public.

Balancing Test

Law enforcement is of paramount importance and the Police service will not disclose information if to do so would undermine its purpose and place the safety of individual(s) at risk. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of using public money in policing appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat posed by criminals, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the integrity of police investigations and operations in this area.

As much as there is public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced in matters of law enforcement, this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances. Any disclosure which hinders our capability and assists criminals cannot be in the public interest.

It is not in the public interest for law enforcement tactics and operational capability to be compromised with the disclosure of all Fleet details, as those who wish to commit criminal acts will be more aware of the vehicles in operation to assist with preventing and detecting crime. Such disclosure that would allow those with criminal intent the ability to build up a mosaic picture of force capabilities and resources which could be used to undermine law enforcement. This would not be in the public interest. Disclosure is also not in the public interest as it places the community at increased unnecessary risk of harm and impact police resources. This is especially the case if additional tactics/resources need to be put in place to counter harm caused by an adverse FOIA request regarding police vehicles.

It is for these reasons that I have determined that the balance test favours non-disclosure of the requested information.