

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
**Our ref:** FOI/24/012604/D

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: FOI/24/012604/D**

I write in connection with your request for information dated 09/05/2024, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

- 1: How many police dogs does Greater Manchester Police have in its force?***
- 2: In the past 5 years, what is the yearly expenditure for all your police dogs?***
- 3: Over the past 5 years how many police dogs which have retired from your force have been put up for adoption?***
- 4: Over the past 5 years how many police dogs which have retired from your force have been taken in by the handler which worked with them?***

**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 all the information requested as exemption applies to question 1 and 2 of this request.

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 1 and 2 has been 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.

## **Harm**

Disclosure of the number of police dogs within the Force 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 police dogs 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 police dogs 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 regarding police dogs 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 questions 1 and 2 of this request.

**Please see the remainder of information which is not exempt below.**

**Question 1** – Exempt

**Question 2** – Exempt

**Question 3** – Zero.

**Question 4** – Approx. 95%