

Date: 30th October 2024
Our ref: FOI/24/013474/P

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: FOI/24/013474/P

I write in connection with your request for information dated 16/10/2024, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

Around the end of October 2023, Stephen Watson, the chief constable of Greater Manchester Police (GMP), made public statements referring to the removal of posters by police featuring Israeli hostages abducted by Hamas.

He said they had "got it wrong" and "It runs entirely contrary to the instructions that we have given to our officers in terms of dealing with this."

Further, he said "The action taken last night, in response to complaints, is contrary to guidance that the force had already issued to staff in relation to flyposting," and "We will continue to work with local authorities and the community to ensure posters can be displayed. We regret any offence caused."

I request a copy of, or a detailed description of this guidance / instructions issued to staff.

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.

Please see the below guidance:

"Putting up posters could constitute an offence of fly-posting or even criminal damage, especially if someone was to incur a cost or spend time removing them.

Fly-posting is enforced by the local authority and not by the police in any case. If a poster were to contain something racist or offensive then it would constitute an offence under the Public Order Act, and that should be the determining factor in us taking positive action by way of investigation (including

seizing for evidence) or arrest should an offender be present. We could also request removal of the posters by the council.

If a poster showed support for a terrorist group, that would be an offence under the Terrorism Act.

It can't constitute criminal damage if someone was to rip or deface a posted poster, as the owner has relinquished their rights to it by discarding it (on application to a surface).

The council enforces fly-posting (should it deem that to be necessary), and we should only intervene when posters (or their defacing) constitute a crime.

If in doubt staff are requested to seek advice from a supervisor."