

Date: 1st October 2024
Our ref: FOI/24/013149/F

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: FOI/24/013149/F

I write in connection with your request for information dated 20/08/2024, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

Please can you list the total number of non-commercial events, (i.e. protests, marches or static demonstrations) that have needed police escort or officer support in person this year in Manchester city centre.

Please list the name of the event and date.

CLARIFICATION

Any protest that required a police presence.

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 GMP, 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. The information requested in relation to information about operational fixed/mobile safety cameras and their operational functions (other than measuring speed) have been exempt from disclosure by virtue of the following exemption:

Section 31(1)(a)(b) – Law Enforcement

Sections 31(1)(a)(b) is prejudice based and qualified exemptions; there is a requirement to articulate the harm that would be caused in disclosing such information as well as carrying out a public interest test, which can be seen below.

Public Interest Test

Harm

Disclosure of the details of non-commercial events which have received support from Greater Manchester Police would reveal tactical capability and vulnerabilities and would compromise the efficient and effective conduct of Greater Manchester Police during these events.

The safety of the public is of a paramount importance to Greater Manchester Police and to release the details of non-commercial events where police officers have been in attendance would compromise the safety of the public that Greater Manchester Police serve to protect.

Furthermore, this would impact the future law enforcement capabilities of Greater Manchester Police in the prevention and detection of crime at non-commercial events which require a police presence as criminals intent on committing crime will have an insight on how and when police resources are used.

Section 31 – Factors Favouring Disclosure

To disclose event details where the police have been present would show accountability of Greater Manchester Police. 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 would also show Greater Manchester Police's use of resources to prevent crime.

Section 31 – Factors Favouring Non-Disclosure

To disclose details of events which have required a police presence 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 paramount importance to Greater Manchester Police and to release the requested information would compromise the safety of the community that Greater Manchester Police have sworn to protect.

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 in the future. It would give advantage to those individuals intent on criminal activity at future events and it may assist potential criminals evading the police as policing levels would become evident. A fear of crime will be realised as criminals identify vulnerable events and target and exploit these events 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 resource capability which could highlight which events the force is focussing more.

In accordance with the Act, this letter represents a Refusal Notice for the information requested.