



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2009-01351

Keyword: Finance

Subject: CONTRACTS AWARDED TO JAMESONS, PORTADOWN

Request and Answer:

Question

Can you please give me under the freedom of information act all details of any and all contracts given to Jamesons of Portadown for building work i.e. total of public money paid ,dates and type of work carried out and what part of the premises they worked on. Also what security measures were used to vet their company and was there any convictions exposed as a result?

Answer

With regard to your various questions regarding contracts given to Jamesons of Portadown I can advise that we are in a position to supply the yearly totals paid to Jameson's from 1999 - 2007, please note the post of Chief Constable only assumed responsibility for Support Services in 1999. The Police Authority were previously responsible for the procurement of Works Contractors and associated payments. The Police Authority are now the Policing Board and you may wish to contact the Policing Board in relation to attaining a complete and accurate record of payments to Jameson's prior to 1999.

The attached document illustrates payments made to Jameson's since 1996; however for the reasons mentioned above with regard to the Police Authority/Policing Board we cannot confirm that the payments for 1996, 1997 and 1998 represent the complete picture for these years. We are aware that the Police Authority employed DOE Construction Service to manage the Estate and they did make direct payments on behalf of the Police Authority to Works Contractors using a draw-down account.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland's, Estate Service Business Unit (ESBU) have advised that to be able to supply details on specific dates and locations where work was carried out would require a manual trawl through each invoice. Estate Service Business Unit do not hold the associated contracts for each invoice, as is not held on the same system and therefore a cross matching administrative exercise would have to be undertaken. To cross match a single invoice is likely to take an average of 5 minutes. As there are 6483 invoices to cross match this would take well in excess of the time permitted to locate and provide the information as set down in Freedom Of Information legislation.

Due to the factors above the cost of complying with this part of your request for information with regard to **dates and places** would exceed the "appropriate limit" as stated in the Freedom of Information Regulations 2004, which is currently set by the Secretary of State at £450.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter should be considered as a Refusal Notice, and this part of your request has therefore been closed.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland have also considered whether we can be of any assistance in terms of helping you refine your request to bring it under the cost limit however the nature and structure of the information unfortunately makes this impossible.

You also ask the question "**Also what security measures were used to vet their company and was there any convictions exposed as a result.**" and I can advise that I have decided to fully exempt a response to this pursuant to the provisions of section 23 - Information supplied by, or concerning, certain security bodies, section 24 - National Security, section 31 - Law Enforcement and section 40 - Personal Information.

The vetting of contractors engaged in work for the Police Service of Northern Ireland is undertaken within a framework, which is identical in each case regardless of the individual concerned.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, 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 not otherwise apparent) why the exemption applies.

The exemptions, as well as the factors the Department considered when deciding any potential harm in release and where the public interest lies, are listed below:

Section 23 - Information supplied by, or concerning, certain security bodies,
Section 24 - National Security,
Section 31 - Law Enforcement and
Section 40 - Personal Information

Harm

The release of information under the Freedom of Information Act must be considered a release of information to the world as a whole and therefore any disclosure of the requested information would clearly identify the process that the Police Service of Northern Ireland undertake when vetting individuals. This would most certainly be of interest to criminal groups or organisations. The harm in releasing this information is that the criminal and terrorist fraternity may then be able to circumvent the procedures thus leading to inappropriate persons having access to police or other establishments allowing them the ability to gauge the level at which PSNI carry out their vetting process and this level of intelligence with other information may reveal PSNI's capabilities that currently exist within the PSNI law enforcement process. Such insight could subsequently damage national security in reducing the ability and manner in which the PSNI would be able to effectively protect the safety and well being of its officers, staff and in return the community if these criminal elements were able to gain access to this type of information.

Public Interest Test

Considerations Favouring Disclosure

Accountability

The information you have requested relates directly to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Police Service of Northern Ireland when carrying out vetting on individuals.

Public Awareness and Debate

The release of this information would contribute to the quality and accuracy of public awareness / debate and would encourage the community in understanding how rigorous the vetting system is.

Considerations Favouring Non-Disclosure

Efficient and Effective conduct of the service

It would not be in the public interest to release information that may prevent or hinder current and future law enforcement. Disclosure is likely to compromise the law enforcement capability of the force. Release of this information can give an advantage to someone looking to exploit any potential weaknesses. The protection and confidentiality around the vetting process must be preserved to ensure it works to the best of its ability and to ensure individuals working both inside and outside PSNI establishments are safe and secure from criminal elements by passing the vetting process.

Public Safety

Any disclosure which may increase the risk of harm being caused in the public arena is not desirable. If information were released surrounding the steps undertaken within the vetting process criminal elements maybe able to use this

information to their advantage and gauge how to breach this rigorous system, which in turn would leave the Police Service of Northern Ireland vulnerable.

Balance

There is a requirement in any public interest test to balance the factors favouring disclosure with those against. The vetting processes are effective and long standing and are not enhanced by any disclosure in this case.

In the current climate within the UK, no information which may aid a terrorist should be provided. Hindsight is a wonderful gift that we are not in possession of at this time. To what extent this information will actually aid a terrorist is unknown, but discretion is our most effective tool. The public entrust the Police to make appropriate decisions with regard to their protection, and the only way of reducing the risk is to be ultra cautious. At this time, in these circumstances, it is undesirable to provide details on the Police Service of Northern Ireland's vetting process and what vetting was carried out.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact me on 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Freedom of Information Team, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this email.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Freedom of Information, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by emailing foi@psni.pnn.police.uk

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ <http://www.psni.police.uk/>

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.

Year	Jamesons
1996	£2,555.90
1997	£3,673.76
1998	£857,580.38
1999	£862,584.30
2000	£966,772.99
2001	£186,852.04
2002	£620,379.04
2003	£1,024,223.74
2004	£899,000.22
2005	£1,753,662.63
2006	£2,374,037.07
2007	£1,892,754.50
TOTALS	£11,444,076.57