



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2009-02404

Keyword: Finance

Subject: PSNI CANTEEN CATERING

Request and Answer:

Question 1

How much in subsidies was paid for PSNI canteen catering in each station, broken down by station?

Answer

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 exemption, as well as the factors the PSNI considered when deciding where the public interest lies, with regard to question 1 are listed below:

Section 43(2), Commercial Interests. This is a prejudice based exemption which means that the public authority must demonstrate that it is satisfied that to release the information would damage someone's commercial interests. It is also a qualified exemption which means that the public authority must consider the balance of the public interest in releasing the information against the public interest in withholding it.

HARM TEST

This information was submitted by the Contractor as part of the competitive tendering exercise for the Catering Services Contract. This is commercially sensitive as it was used within the evaluation criteria for the award of the contract. PSNI could have difficulty in attracting Contractors as this could ultimately impact upon the competitive tendering process.

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

Factors Favouring Release

Accountability – PSNI have to be accountable for how it spends public funds. Access to the information would facilitate the accountability and transparency of public authorities in the spending of public money. Transparency of decisions on how public funds are spent will also generate confidence in the integrity of the procedures involved.

Human Rights, Morals, Ethics – It is fair and reasonable to let public know how money is spent and would assist individuals in challenging those decisions. Could also benefit the level of competition for the catering contract.

Use of Public Funds – Public interest in the justification of money spent on catering services provided to PSNI.

Factors Favouring Retention

Flow of info to service – PSNI could have difficulty in attracting Contractors by releasing costs provided in the tender process and therefore this could ultimately impact upon the competitive tendering process. Third party interests might be jeopardized by release of information that relates to commercial information held about business, financial or contractual issues.

BALANCING TEST

This information is provided from a procurement process in which the costs requested won the tender. However costs being released could jeopardise any future tendering process and I believe this could damage someone's commercial interests as these figures could influence other tendering costs being provided. I believe the prejudice caused by possible disclosure outweighs the likely benefit to the wider public. My decision is therefore not to release the answer to question 1 at this time.

Question 2

How much was paid for courtesy catering at PSNI meetings this year?

Answer

The total amount paid for courtesy catering at PSNI meetings this year (April - July inclusive) was £23,166.00.

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 @ www.psni.police.uk

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