



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2010-02631
Keyword: Finance
Subject: Accounts Payable Processes

Request and Answer:

This is to inform you that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information you requested.

I have today decided to:

- disclose information in answer to Questions 1 – 6 and 8 – 9 in full;
- fully exempt information in answer to Question 7 pursuant to the provisions of Section 38(1)(a)(b) of the Act.

Question 1

I would like some information about your current Accounts Payable processes, please indicate:

Where the Accounts Payable team is currently based and if centralised?

Answer

Accounts Payable is a centralised function based in Belfast.

Question 2

Which finance system/accounting software the finance team uses to process supplier invoices?

Answer

Integra Financial System

Question 3

Number of staff manually processing the invoices?

Answer

Three staff currently input invoices onto the Finance system.

Question 4

Volume of paper and electronic invoices processed per annum?

Answer

PSNI currently process between 80,000 to 100,000 invoices per annum with 20% of these received electronically.

Question 5

Are paper invoices scanned at all?

Answer

All invoices/credit notes for payment through Purchase Ledger are scanned directly into Finance System.

Question 6

Any plans to look at invoice automation/ OCR scanning in the next 6 months to a year?

Answer

PSNI are currently piloting OCR software for our top 30 suppliers in terms of volume transactions.

Question 7

If OCR/ Invoice automation systems already in place please indicate name of supplier?

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 Department considered when deciding where the public interest lies, are listed below:

Section 38(1)(a) and (b) – Health and Safety

Section 38 is a prejudice based and qualified exemption. This means that the PSNI must consider the potential harm in release of the requested information and carry out a public interest test.

Harm Test

Releasing the name of a supplier to the PSNI, into the public domain, where the relationship is not common knowledge would be likely to bring the company to the attention of terrorists. This could risk the safety of the company and its employees, leaving them vulnerable to an attack. At the present time in Northern Ireland the threat level is high for police, police staff and those who are carrying out work for the Police Service.

Public Interest Test**Factors Favouring Release**

There is public interest in information that relates to the use of public funds and how they are used to procure supplies and services.

Factors Favouring Retention

Disclosure may cause a significant risk to the health and safety of employees of the company leaving them vulnerable to a terrorist attack.

Balance Test

Whilst accountability surrounding the use of public funds is always a strong argument in favour of releasing information, the balance will always favour retention where there is a significant risk to the safety of individuals. The safety of individuals is of paramount importance and the PSNI will not divulge any information that could put lives or property at risk. Therefore, I have decided at this time not to release the supplier's name.

Question 8

Please also indicate if OCR scanning technology is used in any other department of the Force and to process what type of documents? Please name the supplier.

Answer

OCR (Optical Character Recognition) scanning technology is used in conjunction with general document scanning to create searchable copies of scanned documents. Fujitsu Services is the supplier to the PSNI.

Question 9

And finally, which Document/ Records Management system is currently used within the Force? And do you use an Enterprise Resource Planning system? Please name it and what version?

Answer

The Document/Records Management system used within PSNI is TRIM (Tower Record Information Management).

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 letter.

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.