



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2010-03041

Keyword: Finance

Subject: Special Priority Payment Panel 16th July 2010

Request and Answer:

I am writing to confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland has now completed its search for the information.

I have today decided to disclose records located in relation to your request subject to the deletion of information pursuant to the provisions of section 31 of the Freedom of Information 2000 (the Act).

Question

I am seeking / requesting the minutes of a meeting held by the Special Priority Payment Panel which was convened on 16th July 2010. The purpose of the meeting was to consider and amend which posts would attract the payment for the year 2010 from posts that had been identified in October 2009.

In particular I am interested in all minutes relating to what consideration and amendments were made regarding the allocation of the payment to the role of Crime Team Constable.

Answer

Please see the attached minutes of the meeting held by the Special Priority Payment Panel which was convened on 16th July 2010. The minutes have been redacted in accordance with the legislation outlined below;

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/s, as well as the factors the Department considered when deciding where the public interest lies, are listed below:

Section 31 (1) (a) (b) and (c) – Law Enforcement

This is a prejudiced based exemption which means that the public authority must demonstrate the harm in the release of the information. 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

Release of the information in relation to establishment and special priority payment budgets for Crime Operations Branch would be likely to prejudice law enforcement functions and activities within this area of the PSNI. Crime Operations Branch is comprised of specialised posts which deal with serious crime and terrorism. To reveal the capabilities of these units would be useful to those involved in serious crime and therefore would be likely to compromise the law enforcement tactics of the PSNI and hinder the prevention and detection of crime.

Public Interest Test

Factors in Favour of Disclosure

The information concerns efficient and effective use of resources by the Service and the proper allocation of resources and special priority payments is a matter that the Service should hold up to public scrutiny.

Disclosure of the information would also illustrate to the public how funds are being spent.

Factors in Favour of Maintaining the Exemption

There is a strong public interest in avoiding likely prejudice to the prevention and detection of crime. Revealing police resources in the Crime Operations Branch of PSNI would allow criminals to plan how best to engage these resources in an effort to maximise their chances of committing serious crime. It is reasonable to assume that confirmation of the number of officers involved would assist such activity by allowing more accurate judgements to be made by criminals.

Decision

Public awareness and the spending of public funds are always valid arguments in the spirit of the legislation favouring release of information. In this case however, this is weighed against the need to ensure the efficient and effective conduct of the Police Service in relation to the prevention and detection of crime. In balance I would contend that the public interest in disclosing the information is outweighed by that in maintaining the exemptions listed, as it is doubtful if it can ever be in the public interest to disclose information which would prejudice the prevention and detection of crime.

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.psnipolice.uk

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

**NIPB SUBMISSION: Special Priority Payment as reviewed by SPP
Panel on 16 July 2010**

The SPP Panel

A meeting was convened on Thursday 16 July 2010 to review the proposed posts for SPP designation in 2010 in line with PNB guidance and Policy Division Circulars as outlined in PSNI SPP Policy documents.

The Panel unanimously agreed that the limitation to A,E,F and G district response and neighbourhood did not reflect the focus on promotion of service wide community confidence in policing and reducing serious harm.

Summary of revised SPP Panel decisions:-

The Panel reviewed proposed designations for 2010 and recommend

REVISION 1:

The Panel agreed to include all eligible constables in response and neighbourhood in all Districts and remove it from supervisory ranks right across the organisation. This is to ensure a very specific focus on the value and role of front-line constables.

- 1- The Panel removed SPP designation to ARU Tactical Crime teams, Area Commanders and CID

REVISION 2:

Remove ARU Response , Tactical Crime Teams, CID (A,E,F &G), Area Commanders

- 2- The Panel agreed that the TSG, Dog handlers and POLSA should attract SPP in tackling serious harm and visible frontline policing.

No change

- 3- The Panel agreed that consistent with the focus on reduction of Serious harm that the Constable posts in Specialist Operations (excluding Ops Centre) would attract SPP and all other Crime post previously proposed for 2010 SPP be removed.

REVISION 3:

Only C4 Surveillance, SOBSU, Technical support and HMSU

- 7- The Panel agreed that a single payment level would apply to all eligible constables occupying an SPP Post in 2010.

The provisional SPP 2010 payment level= £1600

Subject to confirmation of numbers to expend the full SPP budget.

SPP 2010 PROPOSED DESIGNATED POSTS AS APPROVED NOVEMBER 2009 (May be subject to revision): Update October 2010

TIER	SPP Designation	Proposed 2010	In year revision		Total Budget Spend
			Comment	No. of Actual (FTE) @ 30th June 2010 (Regular /FTR Police Only)	
1	Neighbourhood - District A, E, F & G only	272	All Districts (N'hood policing Duty type only)	547	£875,200
1	Neighbourhood Police Security posts - District A, E, F & G only- to be filled in year	47	All Districts	47	£75,200
1	Response - District A, E, F & G only	1029	ALL DISTRICTS ALL Districts (Response Duty type only)	1764	£2,822,400
1	Tactical Crime Teams/CID - District A, E, F & G only	221	Remove		TBC
1	Area Commanders- District A, E, F & G only	15	Remove		TBC
1	TSG (+ 26 Operational Dog Handlers +21 POLSA)	567	Confirmed (Unit Station TSG which includes Dog Handlers Exp Escort & Exp Dog Handlers)	380	£608,000
1	Armed Response Vehicles (ARV's)	59	Remove		TBC
1	Crime Ops designated frontline Intelligence posts (excludes Warrant and CT Ops)	178	Remove		TBC
1	Crime Ops designated Surveillance posts		Confirmed C4*) (inc SOC SHU Urb, SOC SHU Nth, SCO SHU Sth and Unit/Station HMSU exc SOB Supp)		
1	Crime Ops Technical Surveillance Support Unit		Confirmed C4* (Constables Only - Unit/Station Tech Support)		
1	Crime Ops HMSU & SOBSU designated posts		Confirmed C4*TBC*		
Total Designated Posts (Range 1548-3096)					
% To Total Eligible Posts (Range 20%-40%)		33		39	BUDGET 2010

The Establishment figures to be confirmed in line with R2R 4, however the revised SPP actual postholders as set out above falls within the 20-40% parameters

s.F31
s.F31(1)(a)
s.F31(1)(b)
s.F31(1)(c)

s.F31
s.F31(1)(a)
s.F31(1)(b) 2
s.F31(1)(a)
s.F31(1)(b)

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