



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2012-02903

Keyword: Human Resources

Subject: Staffing in Down District Area

Request and Answer:

Question 1

Current number of permanent staff and vacancies in your organisation within the Down District Council area and specifically detailed staffing levels within each of the three main towns of Ballynahinch, Downpatrick and Newcastle:

- Totals and breakdown by full/part time staff, location, section, gender and staff group/grade.

Question 2

Current number of temporary/agency staff in your organisation within the Down District Council area and specifically detailed staffing levels within each of the three main towns of Ballynahinch, Downpatrick and Newcastle:

- Totals and breakdown by location, section, gender and staff group/grade.

Question 3

Residence patterns for all current employees(permanent, temporary and agency staff) of your organisation in the Down District Council area:

- Number resident in Down district and outside of Down district.

Question 4

Number of jobs in your organisation which have been transferred from Down District Council area to other areas over the last 5 years:

- Totals and breakdown by location, section and staff group/grade.

Question 5

Number of jobs in your organisation which have been transferred into Down District Council area from other areas over the last 5 years:

- Totals and breakdown by location, section and staff group/grade.

Question 6

Number of jobs in your organisation which have been made redundant over the last five years in the Down District Council area:

- Totals and breakdown by location, section and staff group/grade.

Question 7

Number of jobs in your organisation which have not been filled as a result of leavers, over the last 5

years in the Down District Council area:

- Totals and breakdown by location, section and staff group/grade.

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 information in response to questions 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 in full; and
- partially exempt information in response to question 1 and fully exempt information in response to question 3 pursuant to the provisions of Sections 31 and 38 of the Act.

Section 17(1) 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) – Law Enforcement

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

Both Section 31 and Section 38 are prejudice based qualified exemptions and this means that the public authority is required to provide harm that could occur following disclosure of the requested information and must consider the balance of the public interest in releasing the information against the public interest in withholding it.

The summary of the Harm and Public Interest considerations for Section 31 and Section 38 are provided below:

Harm Test

The release of information in relation to staff establishment in smaller stations is a highly sensitive area. The release of details of police resources/response team strengths would allow criminals to ascertain the number of police officers and police staff that are available in these areas at any one time to respond to crime and enforce the law. This could expose communities within these areas to significant risk of harm.

Information relating to operational policing figures in individual stations and sections would be useful to terrorists, as would the residency patterns for those officers and staff employed within C District. In Northern Ireland the current threat level is set at **Severe** meaning that a terrorist attack is highly likely, particularly to the Police Service. Disclosure of this information has the potential to assist those seeking to carry out attacks against police officers.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring release - Section 31

Release of this information could inform how public money is spent and provide an insight into resources used in law enforcement within C District.

Factors favouring retention - Section 31

Disclosure could reveal resource levels and capabilities within the PSNI. Disclosure of officer and

staff numbers within stations could compromise law enforcement which could potentially lead to more crime being committed and individuals being placed at risk. The use of this type of information may also be of particular concern in light of the nature and extent of the prevailing terrorist threat. It may be used by criminals/terrorists in combination with other information they may have gathered to try and prejudice law enforcement.

Factors favouring release – Section 38

The PSNI has a duty of protection in Northern Ireland and the public have a right to know that resources in term of police personnel are being used adequately and responsibly to fulfil this duty.

Factors favouring retention – Section 38

Release of this information would be likely to place at risk the lives of officers and the public. This is because the information in question would be useful to terrorists planning to carry out attacks on police officers, police staff and police property, which have in the past been known to be indiscriminate in nature, therefore endangering unsuspecting bystanders in addition to the intended target.

Decision

The PSNI has a duty to fulfil its law enforcement function and, whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of how public funds are allocated and how policing areas are staffed, the delivery of effective law enforcement is of paramount importance. Disclosing information regarding police resources within particular stations could also assist criminals who would be aware of how many police personnel would be available to respond to an incident at any one time. This would be likely to compromise the law enforcement capabilities of the PSNI and put individuals at risk.

To disclose information on residency patterns of personnel and details of establishment levels in stations, if used in conjunction with other information which might be available to terrorists, could cause significant risk to officers and staff. At this time, the Service is under severe dissident threat and the Police Service will not disclose information that will put employees' lives at risk as the safety of individuals is of paramount importance.

In this case I am satisfied that both exemptions at Section 31 and Section 38 are applicable to this information. This therefore should be considered a refusal notice in relation to questions 1 and 3 of your request.

Answer 1

I can advise that there are a total of 143 Police Officers and Support Staff employed within Ballynahinch, Downparick and Newcastle stations. There are currently 2 vacancies in Downpatrick Station.

Answer 2

There are currently no agency or temporary staff in Ballynahinch, Downpatrick or Newcastle stations.

Answer 4

One Sergeant, two Constables, one Executive Officer 1, two Administrative Support Officers and six Administration Assistants have transferred to Newcastle Occurrence Case Management Team (OCMT) from the Down policing area over the last five years.

Answer 5

No jobs have been transferred into Down Policing Area from other areas over the last five years.

Answer 6

No jobs in Down Policing Area have been made redundant over the last five years.

Answer 7

No jobs in Down Policing Area have not been filled as a result of leavers.

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.