



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2012-03161

Keyword: Organisational Information/Governance

Subject: Disposal of IT Equipment

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 information in response to questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13 in full; and
- disclose information in response to question 11 subject to the deletion of information pursuant to the provisions of Section 31 of the Freedom of Information 2000 (the Act);

Question 1

I would like to make a Freedom of Information request on how the Police Force currently disposes of all its I.T equipment and removes data from PCs, Laptops, Mobile Devices such as telephones and Servers prior to disposal.

The information sought is specifically;

Does the police Force Currently have a contract for IT disposal?

- a) If so, which company handles the contract?
- b) When does the contract expire?
- c) Is the contract advertised in the European Journal, Buying Solutions or the Blue Light tendering service? Please detail.
- d) Does the contract cost the Police Force to dispose of IT - what are the typical costs? What is the last 3 and 6 months worth of transactional business?
- f) If the Police Force pays for material to be removed - what is the projected spend over the period of the contracts?
- g) If it is a mixture of cash positive and cash negative, please supply the details.

Answer

The information below has been provided by the PSNI's Information and Communication Services Department (ICS).

Disposal of all IT equipment is carried out by our managed service contract supplier under the direction and policies laid down by PSNI. Fujitsu is our managed service supplier and the contract expires in 2015. This contract was awarded via a full procurement process in the European Journal.

No specific costings in relation to IT disposal are held as this is part of the core services of the contract.

Question 2

Does the Police Force Information Technology Services division specifically get involved in the disposal of IT equipment - collection and actual disposal?

Answer

Information and Communication Services are involved only in the approval process of the disposal of IT equipment.

Question 3

How is data removed from Servers and PCs prior to end of life?

- a) If a software tool is deployed, which tool is it?
 - b) What certification does that tool carry?
 - c) Are hard drives removed and destroyed? If so who removes the hard drives? Force IT Staff?
- How long does it take?

Answer

All media is removed and shredded under a managed service contract by a managed service supplier. No software tool is used.

Question 4

Does the Police Force donate any equipment to charity, good causes or staff? If so how does the Force ensure data protection?

- a) If the force prepares a PC to be donated to charity, good causes or staff - how long does it take to prepare each PC and how does the Force support any of the donated methods in terms of post donation support?
- b) Does the Force own technical support - support donated PC's, laptops and desktops after they have been donated and for how long?
- c) How does the Force transfer the licences from donated PCs, desktops and laptops to the new owners?

Answer

No equipment is donated.

Question 5

Who has overall responsibility for the disposal of IT equipment within the Force? - Please Supply name, telephone and email contact details please.

Answer

The PSNI's Head of Information and Communication Services is responsible for the disposal of IT equipment within the Service. Contact can be made in writing at the following address;

Head of Information and Communications Services,
Police Service of Northern Ireland,
42 Montgomery Road,
Lisnasharragh, Belfast
BT6 9LD

Telephone: 0845 600 8000

Various persons would have responsibility for disposal and for your information to release an individual staff member's name would be likely to engage Sections 38 - Health and Safety and Section 40 - Personal Information. Correspondence can be sent to the address supplied above and this will be directed to the relevant persons.

Question 6

Can the Force track all assets disposed of should there be a breach of data investigation? If so - how would the force track an individual asset?

Answer

Yes, all equipment is recorded in a Change Management Data Base (CMDB).

Question 7

How many incidents has the Force dealt with in the last 3 years, where data has been recovered or found on the IT equipment disposed of?

Answer

There have been no recorded incidents in the last three years where data has been recovered or found on IT equipment which has been disposed of.

Question 8

At what point during the IT and Mobile phone assets lifecycle does the item become a zero cost asset to the Force? (when does the force right off the cost of IT assets?).

Answer

This depends on the type of equipment, for example, PCs are a revenue asset while servers are a capital with a life span of between 5 to 10 years.

Mobile phones are purchased as a revenue item in line with our accounting procedures, they are therefore not subject to depreciation or any associated write off costs.

Question 9

How does the force recognise any rebate back from equipment sold?

Answer

The PSNI does not get rebates from equipment sold.

Question 10

How many staff are involved with decommissioning services of legacy IT equipment?

Answer

Staff involved with decommissioning IT equipment are part of the Managed Services contract. The number of staff perform this role as and when required

Question 11

Is decommissioning a process driven exercise set out by the Force's own IT director? If so please set out the procedures to this.

Answer

The PSNI's ICS Department determine the Decommissioning Policy. This exists as an Information Assurance Standard entitled 'Secure Information Asset Disposal'. The procedures for disposal are contained within this document and it has been decided to withhold these.

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 31 is a prejudice based and qualified exemption so it is necessary for the public authority to state the harm that would or would be likely to be caused by release and carry out a Public Interest Test.

Harm Test

The PSNI is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. The document requested contains details of the processes of the destruction of information assets held by PSNI. It reveals the methodology of PSNI's secure business procedures and its capability to protect its assets. Release of this information would compromise effective law enforcement by highlighting to 'hackers' how to override the removal in an endeavour to infiltrate the information. Such level of detail would be valuable to criminals or terrorists and would directly and indirectly impact on the prevention and detection of crime and the apprehension of criminals by PSNI.

Public Interest Test

For Release

The information requested relates to the efficiency and effectiveness of the PSNI. The public have a right to know that IT equipment is being disposed of responsibly and appropriately. Disclosure would enhance and contribute to the quality and accuracy of public debate and decision making by the service concerning information assurance and security.

For Retention

The procedures used by PSNI to dispose of IT equipment, if released into the public domain, would compromise public safety, inasmuch as the ability to protect the public by delivering operationally effective law enforcement may be jeopardised. Release of this information into the public domain would reveal to 'hackers' how this information could be infiltrated. For example, revealing how operational intelligence is removed by PSNI servers and PCs prior to disposal may result in this information being vulnerable to infiltration. This would compromise law enforcement tactics, place individuals at risk and hinder the prevention and detection of crime.

Decision

There is always a strong interest in the accountability of the Service, however balanced against this I have taken into consideration the likelihood of serious risk to the law enforcement capabilities of the PSNI and the likelihood that individuals could be put at risk. Although there are valid arguments for disclosure of the information, in this case they are outweighed by the strong public interest in the prevention of crime.

Question 12

How old is IT equipment before it is disposed of?

Answer

This age of the IT equipment being disposed depends on the type of equipment and therefore varies.

Question 13

Has the force considered a neighbouring force partnership to the disposal of IT assets to ensure maximum cost savings and any rebates from this exercise?

Answer

No.

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.