



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2015-00892

Keyword: Finance

Subject: Recruitment Agencies

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 to 2 and 4 to 7 in full;
- fully exempt information in response to question 3 pursuant to the provisions of Section 43(2) of the Freedom of Information 2000 (the Act).

Question 1

In last 2 years has your organisation used external recruitment agencies to hire for permanent or contract roles?

Answer

Yes, in last 2 years the PSNI has used external recruitment agencies to hire permanent or contract roles.

Question 2

In list format what are the five highest paid external recruitment agencies with the total amount paid in the last 2 years?

Answer

The PSNI have used three recruitment agencies over the past 2 years (April 2013 – March 2015) to provide staff, the names and total amounts paid are listed below:

Grafton - £341,459.72

Clarendon - £48,040.44

Diamond Recruitment - £20,124.95

Question 3

What is the fee structure charged for the five highest paid vacancies by the above five external recruitment agencies and the roles that were hired for? Example: Office Manager - Salary £20,000

Fees paid 15% of salary = Total recruitment fees paid £3000.

Answer

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 43(2) – Commercial Interests

Section 43 is a class based qualified exemption which means the legislators have agreed there would be harm if this information was released and a Public Interest test must be carried out.

Public Interest Test

Factors Favouring Release

Releasing this information would facilitate the accountability and transparency of public authorities in the spending of public money. There is a keen public interest in how public authorities spend taxpayers' money and that value for money is achieved. Disclosure would better inform the public of the costs involved.

Factors Favouring Retention

To ensure fairness during a tendering process, parties would not have access to tender details from other competitors. Companies compete with rivals and any difference in their tender is often reflected in the price. Information identifying any unique elements such as fee structure is likely to be commercially sensitive. Exposing pricing strategies of another tender could disadvantage the company and weaken their ability to tender for future contracts in a competitive market, impacting on future business revenue.

The PSNI's commercial interests would likely be prejudiced if tender details were disclosed, damaging the business reputation of the Service. Disclosure could discourage companies from submitting commercially sensitive information and consequently undermine the ability of the PSNI to procure best value for public funds and to conduct a fair tender competition in the future.

Decision

Release of this information would likely harm the process of future tenders and prejudice the commercial interests of the PSNI and the company concerned. A release under Freedom of Information is a release into the public domain and not just to the applicant, requesting the information. Once information is disclosed there is no control or limits as to who or how the information is shared with other individuals, **therefore a release under FOI is considered a disclosure to the world in general.**

Any release would prejudice the market/competition and may unfairly advantage a company's competitor. Further where a release would reveal the commercial advantages that parties may have developed over many years at significant cost, I am satisfied that such a disclosure would be likely to cause significant damage to its commercial interests. Such a release would reduce an agencies ability to compete successfully for such services in the future in both the public and private sectors and, by disclosing commercially sensitive material in this way, could diminish confidence in the integrity of the public tendering process and thus disincline companies from competing in such contests. That would weaken the ability of public authorities to obtain value for money in procurement

and I consider that is the overriding public interest in considering whether or not to release the information sought and which has been withheld.

No release of information should be made under FOI where a commercial advantage would be provided.

Whilst accountability surrounding the use of public funds is always a strong argument in favour of releasing information, I have decided that disclosing a breakdown of costs would not be in the public interest.

Question 4

For the coming year what live vacancies does the organisation currently have for permanent or contract roles, please list these vacancies with the following;

- Current or future positions and an exact salary figure
- What type of positions are they? (Contract or Permanent)
- Who is the hiring manager, please provide their full details: Full name, Telephone number, Email, Job Title and Department.

Answer

The PSNI have four live vacancies at present, these are for one fixed wing pilot and three helicopter pilots with a salary circa £50,000 including allowances. These contracts are for a two year fixed term and the process is managed by the External Recruitment Branch, HR Service Centre, Lisnasharragh PSNI station. Other vacancies for the coming year are yet not confirmed at this stage.

Question 5

On which websites are these jobs advertised? Please clearly provide a link/list to where these jobs are advertised.

Answer

These roles were advertised on Flight International Flight magazine online, the PSNI website, Facebook, and Twitter. The application process of these roles had a closing date of 11/02/15.

Question 6

What is the process to selecting new recruitment agencies? Please provide the procurement process for selecting new recruitment agencies and what date is this conducted and by whom? Please provide full contact details.

Answer

The PSNI's contractual arrangements with a recruitment agency to provide permanent recruitment competitions lapsed in December 2012. Interim arrangements allowed for single competitions to be procured under local tender, in accordance with procurement policy. These interim processes were run as and when PSNI organisational need dictated.

Question 7

Is there a purchase threshold below which allows the organisation to use external recruitment agencies which are not on any preferred supplier arrangements or contracts without going through a formal tender process?

Answer

The interim arrangements outlined in the response to Question 6 allow for competitions to be procured locally, where the threshold is below £30,000, in accordance with procurement policy.

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.