



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2018-02967

Keyword: Crime

Subject: Crimes Reported at Belfast City Hall

Request and Answer:

Your request for information below has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) I can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold the information you have requested however it is estimated that the cost of complying with your request for information would exceed the “appropriate costs limit” under Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Request 1

I'm applying under an FOI request to find out the number of incidents of crimes reported at Belfast City Hall between the following dates: Saturday, November 19, 2016 until Thursday, December 22, 2016 (inclusive) and the category of each incident of crime reported; e.g. theft, anti-social behaviour etc.

Request 2

Saturday, November 18, 2017 until Saturday, December 22, 2017 (inclusive) and the category of each incident of crime reported.

Request 3

Saturday, November 17, 2018 until Friday, December 07, 2018 and the category of each incident of crime reported.

Answer

Section 17(5) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Police Service of Northern Ireland, when refusing to provide such information (because the cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit) to provide you the applicant with a notice which states that fact.

It is estimated that the cost of complying with your request for information would exceed the “appropriate costs limit” under Section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Section 12 of FOIA allows a public authority to refuse to deal with a request where it estimates that it would exceed the appropriate limit to either comply with the request in its entirety or confirm or deny whether the requested information is held. The estimate must be reasonable in the circumstances of the case. The ‘appropriate limit’ is currently £600 for central government and £450 for all other public authorities including PSNI. The relevant Regulations which define the appropriate limit for section 12 purposes are The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulation 2004 SI 2004 No 3244. These are known as the ‘Fees Regulations’ for brevity.

Regulation 4(3) of the Fees Regulations states that a public authority can take into account the costs it reasonably expects to incur in carrying out the following permitted activities in complying with the request:

- (i) determining whether the information is held;
- (ii) locating the information, or a document containing it;
- (iii) retrieving the information, or a document containing it; and
- (iv) extracting the information from a document containing it.

Under those regulations PSNI can calculate the time spent on each of these permitted activities at £25 per hour (thus if the activity(s) takes more than 18 hours PSNI will be in excess of the 'appropriate limit').

Enquiries made in relation to your request has identified that retrieval of information would exceed the 18 hour cost limit set by the Secretary of State under the FOI Act. PSNI Statistics Branch would not be able to identify whether a crime was recorded as having occurred within the boundaries of Belfast City Hall. The only way to ascertain whether a crime was recorded as having occurred at this location would be to read through each incident that falls within electoral ward Central. For the time periods requested there were 1951 unique crimes recorded in this ward, which would take approximately 325 hours to look up on PSNI computer system Niche putting the request over cost.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter should be considered as a Refusal Notice, and the request has therefore been closed.

You may wish to submit a refined request in order that the cost of complying with your request may be facilitated within the 'appropriate limit'. In compliance with Section 16 of the Act, I have considered how your request may be refined to bring it under the appropriate limit. Due to the large numbers involved I am unable to offer you refinement.

Please note: Resources are available on www.police.uk which may prove useful and some pointers have been outlined below.

Street level crime and anti-social behaviour figures are available on the Crime Mapper website (<https://www.police.uk/>). Through this website it is possible to use the mapping facilities of this website to identify the streets you are interested in and obtain crime and specifically burglary figures. The website is updated on a monthly basis.

Below is some guidance on how to use the website.

After selecting FIND YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD, a user can put in their postcode and it will take them to a map for that area showing the number of crimes/ASB. Selecting Explore the crime map allows users to manipulate the map and also allows them to draw their own boundary and see crimes/ASB within that boundary. It is also possible for users to download data and use this to map the information themselves.

A few pointers that may be helpful are outlined below:

- After the specific boundary has been drawn on the map, click on the link to the right of the map showing 'View detailed statistics'. This will show figures for the last 12 months based on the specific area drawn.
- Comparison of crime types in this area (showing latest 12 months) – this shows the totals for each crime type and ASB for the latest 12 months.
- Crime levels in this area (showing latest 12 months) – this shows the number of crimes/ASB each month for the latest 12 months. There is a selection tool allowing the chart and numbers to be changed to show lower level crime types or ASB.
- The data can also be downloaded from this screen as a CSV file.

Submission of a refined request would be treated as a new request, and considered in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, including consideration of relevant Part II exemptions.

If you have any queries regarding your request or this 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.