



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



Request Number: F-2020-02065

Keyword: Human Resources

Subject: Causewayway Coast and Glens Command Area

Request and Answer:

Your request for information has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Act I can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold the information to which your request relates and this is being provided to you. We also further consider that the information requested at request number 2 is withheld in full and is exempt virtue of Sections 31, 38 and 40 of FOIA and have detailed our rationale as to why this exemption applies. We further consider the information you seek in request numbers 3 and 4, is partially exempt by virtue of Sections 31, 38 and 40 of FOIA and have detailed our rationale as to why this exemption applies. We have also provided you with links to guidance issued by the Information Commissioner’s Office which we have followed in responding to your request.

Request 1

The total current compliment of PSNI officers in Causeway Coast and Glens command area, broken down into gender and religion.

Answer

The total number of Police Officers for Causeway Coast and Glens is 199.

Please see the table below which provides the gender and religious breakdown.

Community Background			Gender		Total
Protestant	Roman Catholic	Undetermined	Male	Female	
135	63	1	149	50	199

Request 2

The total current compliment of civilian staff in Causeway coast and glens command area, broken down into gender and religion.

Answer

Due to this information to be considered to be low level and identifiable data, this information is exempt for the reasons as outlined below.

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 exemptions, as well as the factors the Department considered is listed below:

Section 40(2)(a)(b) by virtue of Section 40(3)(A)(a) – Personal Information

Section 31 (1) – Law Enforcement (a) the prevention or detection of crime (b) the apprehension or prosecution of offenders

Section 38 (1)(b) – Health & Safety – Information is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to (b) endanger the safety of any individual.

The full text of exemptions can be found at www.legislation.gov.uk and further guidance on how they operate can be located on the Information Commissioners Office website www.ico.org.uk.

Sections 31 and 38 are prejudiced based qualified exemptions which mean the PSNI must demonstrate harm in disclosure and consider the balance of the public interest in releasing the information.

Section 40 (2) of the FOIA is an absolute exemption which means there is no requirement on the PSNI to consider whether there is a public interest in disclosure. It is an interface exemption and we must consider whether release of the information would breach the General Data Protection Regulations ('GDPR') or the Data Protection Act 2018 ('DPA') Third party personal information which can identify individuals is 'personal data' under the GDPR (Article 4) and DPA (Part 1 s.3).

The six data protection principles are good information handling standards which PSNI must comply with in relation to how it handles personal information, including deciding whether to disclose it or not. In particular, the first principle requires personal data to be processed 'fairly and lawfully'. In considering whether it is 'fair' to any individual to release information about them, PSNI considered the likely expectations of those individuals and the nature of the information involved. Individuals must have confidence that their information is treated sensitively and appropriately by PSNI. We consider those individuals would not have any reasonable expectation PSNI would disclose such information of this nature about them. We consider it would be extremely unfair to those individuals and therefore a breach of the first principle of data protection legislation. This information is therefore exempt under section 40 (2) of the FOIA as it contravenes data protection legislation to release it and PSNI has made the decision to withhold that information.

A summary of the Harm and Public Interest Test for Section 38 and 31 is provided below.

Harm

The information refers to information of staffing levels of police and the release of this information is a sensitive area. Once information is disclosed by FOI 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 release to the world in general, not just to the individual requesting the information.

Disclosing details of numbers of officers attached to each station could identify personnel and there would be a security issue if numbers of officers at each station was to be made public. Releasing these details into the public domain would allow criminals and anyone intent on disrupting police in their law enforcement role, both directly and indirectly impacting on the prevention and detection of crime. It is further confirmed by the current threat level in Northern Ireland which is currently SEVERE. PSNI is aware of the mosaic and precedent effects of releasing information which may be of use to terrorists. A clear link exists between knowledge available to criminals and the way they operate, with the resultant impact on PSNI potentially giving a tactical advantage to criminals.

Public Interest Test

Factors Favouring Release – Section 31

Release of this information could give the public better access to Police departments and provide a clearer understanding of the organisational structure.

Factors Favouring Retention – Section 31

Disclosure of staff levels could compromise the PSNI's law enforcement abilities. Disclosing information could leave officers vulnerable to attack by those criminal elements seeking to subvert police, compromising law enforcement tactics and hindering the prevention and detection of crime and apprehension or prosecution of offenders, impacting on police resources. This could potentially lead to more crime being committed and individuals being placed at risk.

Factors Favouring Release - Section 38

Disclosure of this information would promote openness and transparency.

Factors Favouring Retention - Section 38

Releasing information on staffing levels could place officers and members of the public at risk, leaving them vulnerable to attack by criminals or terrorists. Public safety is of paramount importance to the PSNI and must always be considered so that the PSNI's ability to fulfil its core function of law enforcement is protected. PSNI would not wish to endanger the health and safety of any individual.

Decision

The release of information under FOI is a release into the public domain and not just to the individual requesting the information. Once information is disclosed by FOI, there is no control or limits as to how the information is shared with other individuals therefore a disclosure under FOI is considered a release to the world in general.

While there may be a public interest in releasing the information requested, the PSNI must ensure that its law enforcement capability is not adversely affected by the release of staffing levels. However the PSNI will not release details that may hinder the detection or prevention of crime through the release of information which may be of assistance to criminals. Whilst the PSNI would always wish to be transparent and accountable, there is a very strong interest in protecting police officers and safeguarding police methodology.

As the current threat level in Northern Ireland remains at SEVERE, it is vital that the disclosure of information held by PSNI does not endanger the safety of officers or impact on the effective delivery of operational law enforcement activity.

The release of staffing levels details into the public domain has the potential to assist terrorists and those criminal elements seeking to carry out attacks against persons who are employed by PSNI. The lives and safety of police personnel and members of the public are of paramount importance and the PSNI will not divulge any information which could put any individual at risk. However, police need to make balanced judgements which justify why some information needs to remain exempt and unpublished. I have therefore determined that the release of this information into the public domain would not be in the public interest.

Request 3

The number of operational police stations in Causeway Coast and Glens command area, to include opening hours and number of personnel attached to each station. The personnel to be broken down into PSNI officers and civilian staff including their gender and religion.

Answer

There are 2 operational police stations, Coleraine and Limavady – Opening hours: 1100 – 1900 hours, Monday – Friday. For assistance information about the District can be found using the link to

the PSNI website: <https://www.psni.police.uk/my-area/all-districts/causeway-coast-and-glens/>

However the details of the personnel attached to each station has not been provided as articulated in response to request number 2.

Request 4

The total current number of detectives, community police and response officers in the Causeway coast and glens command area broken down by title.

Answer

There a total of 199 officers, however the decision has been made to withhold the breaking down the number of officers in specific roles would be harmful for the same reasons as outlined in response to request number 2.

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 Corporate Information Branch, 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 Corporate Information Branch, 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.