

Evidence of Harm

Disclosure of this information would potentially make it possible for offenders to gain an advantage over the force's ability to carry out law enforcement.

In considering whether or not this information should be disclosed, consideration has been given to the potential harm that could be caused by disclosure. The police service's primary responsibility is law enforcement, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. Modern day policing is intelligence led and there are daily changes. Disclosure of this information in respect of how many security guards work at West Midlands Police (externally contracted or otherwise) opens up a risk to the Force assets as well as potentially placing the safety of our employees and other persons (general public) who may happen to be frequenting Force buildings.

Disclosure of this information could be invaluable to members of the criminal fraternity, thereby providing would be offenders with knowledge of security measures in place at the Force. This information could be invaluable to those individuals intent on criminal activity as they would have some knowledge that would enable them to plan a criminal act against the Force.

Public Interest Test

Considerations favouring disclosure

Disclosure of the request information could increase public awareness regarding resources around security measures. We recognise that there is a call for openness and transparency and disclosure of information may aid in showing the public how we direct our publically funded resources to invest in their safety, should they ever visit any of our buildings, which is of paramount importance. This in turn may promote and instil greater confidence in the communities that we serve.

Considerations favouring non-disclosure

Information regarding security measures taken to protect Force assets and persons who frequent Force buildings should not be disclosed if it could in any way be of assistance to offenders intent on committing criminal acts. It could compromise police tactics used to guard buildings and may result placing persons inside at risk by endangering their safety.

Balance Test

After considering the advantages and disadvantages in disclosure, it falls upon West Midlands Police to conduct a balance test regarding these issues. For a public interest test, issues that favour release need to be measured against issues that favour non-disclosure. The public interest is not what interests the public, or a particular individual, but what will be the greater good, if released, to the community as a whole.

The points above highlight the merits for and against disclosure. The argument for release, which is centred around openness and transparency on how West Midlands Police directs publically funded resources is noted. However, on balance, it is considered that the public interest in disclosing the information is outweighed by the negative impact that disclosure could have on law enforcement, which in turn could go on to risk the safety of individuals. West Midlands Police would never disclose information that could compromise our essential duty of safeguarding and protecting the public. Therefore in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.