

Harm

To provide the individual call signs for specific departments could undermine existing or future investigations, operations and police tactics. This information could also help members of the criminal fraternity to avoid detection, it could also inhibit the prevention and detection of crime.

Factors Favouring Disclosure

Police forces need to be properly equipped in order to meet the demands placed upon them. This information could go some way towards reassuring the public that West Midlands Police is adequately prepared in all areas and would lead to a better public awareness of the workings of the police force and the communications used with operations and during routine policing.

Disclosure of call signs used by certain departments would provide an insight into the intricacies and identification of police units, and would reveal a better understanding of the tactical capabilities of the police when deploying their units

Factors Favouring Non-Disclosure

Specific information relating to the tactical information of units would reveal resource information and intelligence to the criminal fraternity. Knowledge of the call signs coupled with other information would allow individuals to listen in to the radios and officers could be directed into potentially dangerous situations. It could also furnish individuals or groups with the opportunity to identify where a specific crime has taken place, it could also lead to harm and compromise our law enforcement capabilities.

BALANCE TEST

For a public interest test, issues that favour disclosure 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.

In considering the public interest in relation to this request, I must balance the factor in relation to transparency and accountability, against the public interest in ensuring that West Midlands Police are able to appropriately enforce the law.

We recognise that the public interest in being open and transparent is of great importance to all and release of information may assist in the public being more aware of the work that the police are carrying out. However, while the public interest considerations favouring disclosure are noted, this must be balanced with the impact any release would have on the operational capability tactical approach of the police.

Because the Freedom of Information Act is 'applicant blind', any information released under the Act is available to everyone. It is well documented that criminals will use every advantage they can gain to successfully carry out their criminality.

Therefore it is my view that the public safety from non-disclosure is of greater importance than the advantage of public confidence from the disclosure of this information.

At this time, it would not be in the public interest to release this information West Midlands Police will not disclose information that could harm the public or that could compromise the safety and operational effectiveness of its officers.