

Public Interest Test 6466/19

Applicable Exemptions:

Section 24(1) National security

Section 31(1) Law enforcement

Harm

The disclosure of the requested information would provide the public at large with details of force systems which are intended to be secure. These systems are secure because they contain a variety of information which relates to policing activities. This information might include data relating to investigations, police intelligence and personal information. The requested information could be used by a hostile party to plan and execute an attack on force systems. Such attacks could take the form of data theft, denial of service or other deliberate disruptions. This could not help but have the effect of reducing the ability of the police to undertake relevant activities.

Section 24 (1) (National Security)

Reasons for Disclosure

The public are entitled to know how public funds are spent and resources distributed within the area of policing. Disclosure of the requested information would enable the general public to hold West Midlands Police accountable for the decisions they make concerning software and technology. In the current financial climate of cuts and with the call for transparency of public spending this would enable improved public debate.

Reasons for Non-Disclosure

Security measures are put in place to protect the community that we serve. Any disclosure of the video management systems that we use would be detrimental to the IT infrastructure of those forces that use a particular type of system that has perceived vulnerabilities. By exposing those forces with vulnerable systems criminals could geographically map out vulnerable police forces.

In the current security climate within the United Kingdom, no information which may aid a criminal / terrorist should be disclosed. To what extent this information may aid a terrorist is unknown, but it is clear that it will have a considerable negative impact on the force's ability to monitor terrorist activity. The public entrust the Police Service to make appropriate decisions with regard to their safety and protection and the only way of reducing risk is to be cautious with the information that is released.

Section 31 (1) Law enforcement

Reasons for Disclosure

The disclosure of the requested information would show which software/hardware is used by the police service and reassure the public that these systems are up to date and secure.

Reasons for Non-Disclosure

Disclosure would provide those intent on disrupting police activities with enough information to plan and execute a targeted attack. This would be detrimental to the effective operation of police activities. Additional resources would be required to counter the attack and this would also have financial implications. Where systems were compromised, there is also the potential for sensitive information such as personal data, security information and other data to be made public.

Balancing Test

The Police Service is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. As part of that policing purpose, information is gathered which can be highly sensitive and relate to high profile investigative activity. Weakening the mechanisms used to monitor any type of criminal activity, and specifically terrorist activity would place the security of the country at an increased level of danger.

In order to comply with statutory requirements and to meet the NPCC's expectations of the Police Service with regard to the management of information security, a national policy created by the College of Policing titled Information Assurance has been put in place. This policy has been constructed to ensure the delivery of core operational policing by providing appropriate and consistent protection for the information assets of member organisations. A copy of this can be found at the below link:

<https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/information-management/information-assurance/>

This is linked to the old ACPO Information Systems Community Security Policy:

<http://library.college.police.uk/docs/APPref/ACPO-ACPOS-2009-Information-Systems.pdf>

In addition, anything that places that confidence at risk, no matter how generic, would undermine any trust or confidence individuals have in the Police Service.