

969A_20 Attachment – West Midlands Police PIT

Harm

West Midlands Police (WMP) are charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. To release the requested information causes a significant risk to future law enforcement capability of the force.

WMP has a duty to prevent crime, apprehend and prosecute offenders and carry out the administration of justice.

Factors Favouring Disclosure

WMP are accountable to the public for the efficient resourcing, training and budgeting of specialist units and departments, so that the public can be content that our force is fulfilling its responsibility to protect and serve our communities. It is in the public interest to know how the force uses those resources.

We recognise that the public interest in being open and transparent is of great importance to all and release of information may assist the public in being more aware of the work that the police are carrying out. Therefore, a better awareness may in turn lead to more information being provided by the public to West Midlands Police as they would be more conscious of suspicious activities.

Factors favouring non-Disclosure

The disclosure of this information could compromise law enforcement tactics, in this case operation names and details, prison information; the more information disclosed over time will give a more detailed account of the tactical infrastructure of not only a force area but also the country as a whole. Releasing this information into the public domain could allow offenders to map the operational capabilities of forces.

West Midlands Police would not wish to reveal tactics that may or may not have been used as this would clearly undermine the law enforcement.

This would compromise the current and future law enforcement role of the Police Service and where current or future law enforcement capabilities of the force may be compromised by the release of information, it is unlikely to be in the interest of the public.

Balancing 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 serve the greater good, if released, to the community as a whole. Where information does not impact on any future possible investigation, or where the detriment is not large, there is a public interest in providing information to ensure greater transparency. This is significant as it would help increase public confidence in the force, and may encourage more victims and witnesses to come forward to report crimes or suspected crimes to the police. However, the police service is responsible for enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve, and the release of the requested information may have a negative impact on operational law enforcement and may put communities and individuals at risk.

As part of the policing purpose, information is gathered which can be highly sensitive relating to high profile investigative activity. Police forces work in conjunction with other agencies and on a daily basis information is freely shared in line with information sharing protocols.

Having considered the arguments for and against release, the public interest test favours non-release of material which directly impacts on any on-going or future operations and law enforcement structure. The greater public interest is served in maintaining the integrity of the justice process, and this in turn favours maintaining the exemption in relation to the withheld material. West Midlands Police will not disclose information that could compromise the future law enforcement role of the force.