

Request Reference: 544A/22

Applicable exemption:

Section 31(1)(a)(b) – Law enforcement

Harm

The redacted sections of the 'Twitter Guidance' contain details of the internal processes to follow when dealing with intelligence received via this channel. Release of this would provide knowledge to criminal minded individuals or groups, who may try to use this information in order to disrupt the flow of intelligence into the force. The receipt of intelligence is crucial to a law enforcement agency's ability to combat those intent on committing criminal acts, and anything that reduces this flow would therefore weaken this ability.

Considerations in favour of disclosing the information

It is important that police forces are open and transparent, as this will help to gain and maintain the public's trust and confidence, something which is essential for effective law enforcement. Release of the redacted sections could go some way to demonstrating our commitment to openness and transparency.

Considerations in favour of maintaining the exemption

It is known that criminals will use every method at their disposal in order to carry out their activities and avoid detection. Release of the redacted sections as described in the harm above, would give those persons with ill intent, an understanding of some of the ways we collate intelligence. This could assist them in trying to hamper this process, in order that they may carry on with their offending and avoid detection.

Balance Test

For a public interest test, arguments in favour of disclosing the information must be weighed against arguments in favour of withholding the information (i.e. maintaining the exemption). The 'public interest' here means what will be for the public good, not what is of interest to the public, or the private interests of a requester.

Whilst I recognise the importance of the force being open and transparent, there is also a hugely important public interest in protecting the law enforcement capabilities of police forces, so that they can keep the public safe by preventing and detecting crime and apprehending and prosecuting offenders. Any release [of information] that could weaken this capability is clearly therefore not in the public interest.

The redacted sections contain instructions with regard to the internal processes concerning the receipt of intelligence and anything that might disrupt this process, could have a catastrophic effect on an ongoing incident or investigation.

Therefore, after careful consideration, it is my opinion that the factors in favour of releasing the redacted sections of the guidance under the subheading of 'Receiving intel on Twitter' do not outweigh the factors for maintaining the exemption and withholding the information.