

Public Interest Test

Exemptions - Section 31(1) (a) (b) -Law Enforcement

Harm

The disclosure of the requested information would provide the public at large with details of force systems and products which are intended to be secure. These systems and products 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.

Criminals would gain a greater understanding of the police's methods and techniques, enabling them to take steps to counter them and avoid detection.

This could not help but have the effect of reducing the ability of the police to undertake relevant activities.

Reasons for Disclosure

The disclosure of the requested information would show which software/hardware/ systems is used by the police service and reassure the public that these systems are used in the correct manner to reduce crime, which in turn would give them confidence that measures are in place to keep them safe. This would also provide reassurance in relation to what products we use and the way in which we use them.

It is logical therefore that there is also public interest in the way the West Midlands Police handles and is able to use such data.

Reasons for Non-Disclosure

Disclosure would provide those intent on disrupting police activities with enough knowledge about our processes, information we hold, systems we use and the way in which we use these.

This would be detrimental to the effective operation of police activities. Information of any kind. in relation to the work we do, could be considered valuable to those intent on criminal behaviour. Therefore, we have to remain vigilant and cautious but also as transparent as possible without compromising the work we do.

In addition, the public has a reasonable expectation that the police service will protect their data, and releasing detailed information in this way could, in turn, reduce the public's willingness to engage with police agencies.

Ultimately any disclosure that would have a negative effect on our core functions of law enforcement would not be in the best interests of the public.

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.

Weakening the mechanisms used to monitor any type of criminal activity, would place the security of the community at an increased level of danger.

Having considered the arguments for and against, the public interest test favours non-disclosure of this information. West Midlands Police will not disclose information that could compromise the future law enforcement role of the force.

