



HEDDLU GOGLEDD CYMRU
Gogledd Cymru diogelach

NORTH WALES POLICE
A safer North Wales

Response Date: **07/04/2014**

2014/210 - Community Messaging Service

In response to your recent request for information regarding;

Many public sector organisations use a 'community messaging' or 'neighbourhood alert' system whereby members of the public and other local community groups can sign up or subscribe to receive alerts from your organisation via email, automated voice call or SMS text message. It's a system your force would typically use to send messages about incidents, missing persons or other urgent issues.

1. Does your organisation currently use such a system?

Yes.

2. If so, which one? (e.g. Ringmaster, Neighbourhood Alert, Owl, bespoke/developed in-house etc.)

OWL Lite.

3. If it was developed in-house, how long ago and at what cost?

N/A. It was not developed 'in-house'.

4. Which message sending methods does it support from the following: email, SMS, voice call, Twitter, Facebook?

All of the above.

5. Approximately how many active users/subscribers does it have across each message sending method?

29,517.

6. Can you please provide a copy of the contract with your supplier? (if applicable)

Concerns have been raised in releasing a copy of the contract as the commercial interests of the supplier could be affected. Therefore, a Public Interest Test has been carried out to weigh up the reasons for and against disclosure; to ensure the release is in the interest of the public as a whole and not just the applicant. Additionally, North Wales Police need to ensure it does not hinder the force or any other bodies/businesses.

The Public Interest Test has considered the following exemption;

Section 43 (2) - Commercial Interests, is to be considered as part of a Public Interest Test to weigh up the factors for and against disclosure.

Section 43 (2) - Commercial Interests

Section 43 (2) Considerations

Information cannot be released into the public domain if it is likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person (a 'person' may be an individual, a company, public authority itself or any other legal entity). Disclosures under the Freedom of Information Act are disclosures to the world, not just to the individual making the request. To release a copy of the contact could allow other companies providing similar services to undercut any future bids.

Release of the information requested could also be used by other companies/bodies to try and obtain a more favourable rate when purchasing items. In addition the current provider may not be able to offer the same rates to everyone they supply services for, and this in turn would affect the rates North Wales Police/other companies/bodies receive.

Section 43 Factors Favouring Disclosure

There is a public interest in the release of information which demonstrates financial transparency and accountability, through scrutiny of the spending of public money.

In this case it may be in the public interest to release the contact with the breakdown of charges North Wales Police have been able to obtain. Such accountability will demonstrate whether or not value for money has been achieved by the force spending money wisely and effectively, which is in the public interest.

Section 43 Factors Favouring Non-Disclosure

The procurement process has been devised to ensure North Wales Police and other police forces carry out competitive tendering for their externally sourced services. In view of this fact, the release of the information requested could undermine any future negotiating position that the suppliers may have because competitors would be aware of their capability. This would give competitors an unfair advantage in any future procurement process. It may also reduce the pool of companies willing to enter into a commercial relationship with North Wales Police, thus reducing competition in the procurement process.

Within a competitive environment, this information could be used by other competitors to glean information that may be advantageous to them in this or any other tendering process as the company may not be able to offer the same rates to every customer. As such, the release of sensitive commercial information relating to the companies capability and/or the unique element they are offering could adversely affect the companies' interests.

Balancing Test

The public interest test is not what interests the public, but a test of whether the community would benefit from possession of the information. The accountability for the spending of public funds is a powerful argument. However, disclosure of the information requested is likely to damage the relationship between the authority and the company that supplies the service.

Therefore, the damage incurred by the release of this information, including a possible actionable breach of confidence and the possibility of increased public expenditure in the future far outweighs the benefit of accountability for public funds.

Therefore, in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter acts as a Refusal Notice under section 17 (1) of the legislation.

7. Can you please specify the contract end date? (if applicable)

30/04/2015.

8. Does your organisation use the Government's G-cloud/CloudStore platform to purchase IT and software? If not, when do you plan to do so?

OWL is on G –cloud.

The systems used by Police forces in the United Kingdom for recording such figures are not generic. It should be noted that, for this reason, this force's response to your questions should not be used for comparison purposes with any other response you may receive.

THIS INFORMATION HAS BEEN PROVIDED IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST
UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000, AND IS CORRECT AS AT 17/03/2014