

EXEMPTION NOTICE

Applicable Exemption

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

Reason for Applying the Exemption

Harm

Disclosing details of the specific locations of CCTV cameras within our custody suites specification of vehicles, and availability of vehicles.

Would provide a person who may be intent on criminal activities with invaluable information as to the capability of the force allowing them to adjust their own tactics accordingly.

Considerations Favouring Disclosure

Police forces need to be properly equipped in order to meet the demands placed upon them. This information could go some way towards reassuring the public that the West Midlands Police Force is adequately prepared in all areas.

The release of this information would provide an insight into the police service and enable the public to have a better understanding of the effectiveness of the police. This could also provide reassurance for the public that when they enter a vehicle / custody facility their movements within certain areas are captured. This would also provide re-assurance to the community that WMP have implemented process changes as a result of previous incidents.

Disclosing this information would provide greater transparency in the law enforcement process and the actions of West Midlands Police.

This was a high profile case over a number of years, theretofore there is a strong public interest for WMP to release information into the public domain. By doing so this would highlight what WMP have learned and implemented as a result of such a catastrophic event.

There is always a strong public interest in public authorities disclosing information to show they are operating in as transparent a manner as possible, this should ensure they operate effectively and efficiently.

Considerations Favouring Non-Disclosure

Knowing where all cameras are, would place the force in a vulnerable position, criminals could use this information to target the custody location / specific vehicles, to reduce the capability of the force. The names of the buildings are already in the public domain. Criminals could use this information to determine where cameras are operating within certain locations and the availability of certain vehicles.

Vulnerabilities and capabilities would be highlighted. Offender's intent on committing criminal behaviour could create a mosaic of data, for example information in relation to locations, shift patterns, total of officers within specific locations, could be added to this information to build up a picture. This would identify areas of vulnerability or non-

detection. This could in turn reduce the effectiveness of the force and place the force and its employees at increased risk.

Although the police work in an environment that requires them to expect their safety to be compromised, WMP have a duty of care to safeguard its employees as well as the community it serves.

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

Balance Test

In considering the public interest in relation to this request I have balanced the factors in relation to transparency and accountability against the public interest in ensuring that West Midlands Police are able to appropriately enforce the law and protect the public

For a public interest test, issues that favour release 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 be the greater good, if released, to the community as a whole.

We recognise that the public interest in being open and transparent is of great importance to all and release of information may assist in the public being more aware of the work that the police are carrying out. However, while the public interest considerations favouring disclosure are noted, this must be balanced with the impact any release would have on the operational capabilities of the force.

Because the Freedom of Information Act is 'applicant blind', any information released under the Act is available to everyone. It is well documented that criminals will use every advantage they can gain to successfully carry out their criminality.

Releasing specific monitoring of locations into the public domain would compromise the current and future law enforcement role of the force. To release this information, is unlikely to be in the interest of the public

Therefore it is my view that the public safety from non-disclosure is of greater importance than the advantage of public confidence from the disclosure of this information. West Midlands Police will not disclose information that could harm the public or that could compromise the safety and operational effectiveness of the force or its officers

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