

FAO Mr Jones
request-672047-2333d5b8@whatdotheyknow.com

Date: 21st July 2020

Our ref: RFI – 2493

Your ref:

Dear Mr Jones,

Freedom of Information Act 2000
Your Request for Information concerning PPE from China

I refer to your Freedom of Information Request received on the 23rd June 2020 requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 relating to PPE from China.

Please see response below you were seeking to the following question(s).

Question

Dear Sunderland City Council,

Please provide details of costs associated with:

1. Supply of PPE from China, supplied by China as promoted in press with Cllr Miller.
2. Transport costs associated with bringing this PPE to Sunderland.
3. Storage costs associated with this PPE when in the UK.
4. Has the PPE been 'signed off'/approved for use in the UK?
5. What percentage of the PPE has been used?
6. Who has this PPE been supplied to, so far?

Response

Sunderland and Harbin have had a Friendship Agreement since 2009 which has fostered, promoted and grown a range of links between the two cities. The links have included not only education and business contacts, but also a new health partnership with City Hospitals and public health colleagues which was developed last year.

As COVID was hitting the UK in April, Sunderland City Council received an offer of PPE from Mr Sun Zhe, the Mayor of Harbin in northern China. This offer was accepted by Leader of Sunderland City Council, Councillor Graeme Miller.

10,000 masks and 400 pairs of goggles were supplied to Sunderland as a donation.

Due to the complexities of the processes involved, and Vantec's specialist knowledge in global logistics, from export and import controls to travel and transportation, they agreed to handle the import of the PPE on behalf of the Council. The PPE was transferred as part of an airfreight consignment and was transferred to Vantec Europe Limited's facility at Hillthorn Business Park in Washington.

The total cost to the Council was £2,152.20 covering freight, airline, customs clearance and delivery. There are no storage costs to the Council for the PPE.

The PPE was manufactured in China at the Harbin Pharmaceutical Factory. Other European countries, such as France and Germany have also imported and masks manufactured in Harbin. Due to the speed at which Harbin Pharmaceutical Factory has begun to manufacture these products there has not been sufficient time for them to undergo conformity assessment procedures. There was, however, a temporary relaxation by the EU of the requirement of the CE mark (Ref 2020/403) and this was followed by the UK in addition to EU countries

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/879095/Guidance-for-businesses-ppe-regulations-version-2.pdf). Both the masks and the goggles meet Chinese national standards and requirements: the masks are categorised as "YY0469-2011 Medical Surgical Masks"; the goggles are categorised as GB14866-2006. They were also tested by Chinese authorities.

They are suitable as face coverings for day-to-day indoor or outdoor work or wearing on public transport. 100% of the masks have been allocated/distributed to the following Sunderland community organisations, who are actively supporting local communities during the pandemic:

- Sunderland Foodbank Network
- Easington Lane Community Access Point
- Youth Almighty
- Pallion Action Group
- The Box Youth Project
- Back on the Map
- CHANCE
- Young Asian Voices
- Ryhope Community Association
- Blue Watch Youth Centre
- SNCBC
- Southwick Neighbourhood Youth Project
- Friends of Fulwell
- Sunderland Community Action Group

The 400 goggles are yet to be allocated/distributed.

I hope this is satisfactory. If, however, you are dissatisfied with our response to your request for information, you can ask for the decision to be reviewed in reply to this letter, however any request for review must be submitted within 40 days of the date of this freedom of information response.

The review will be removed from the Directorate and coordinated by the Council's team of Solicitors. A request for review should be directed, by email to freedom.information@sunderland.gov.uk by post or by hand addressed to Business Support, Sunderland City Council, Civic Centre, Burdon Road, Sunderland. SR2 7DN.

If this fails to resolve your concerns, then you have the right to apply to the Information Commissioner for a decision.

Yours sincerely

Paul Davies
Assistant Director of Business and Property Services