



WILTSHIRE POLICE

Force Disclosure Unit

Police Headquarters
London Road
DEVIZES
Wiltshire
SN10 2DN

Date: 14th July 2023

Ref: FOI 2023/706

Dear,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 13th July 2023 concerning officers in Swindon.

I am required by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to handle all requests in a manner that is blind as to the identity and motives of the requestor. Any information released as a response to a request is regarded as being published and therefore in the public domain without caveat.

Your request for information has now been considered and I am not obliged to supply the information you have requested.

You wrote:

Why at least 5 police officers in uniform and in 3 police vehicles were standing outside their vehicles chatting over refreshments on 12 Jul 23 at 8am outside the shops/cafes at Lydiard Fields, Swindon.

The officers were in 3 police vehicles as follows

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I want to know if all of the officers were on an official refreshment break. If so it is normal practice to have so many officers and police vehicles on break at the same time at the same location.

Our response:

Wiltshire Police is unable to answer your request for information as it is considered to be vexatious under Section 14(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Whilst there is no obligation on Wiltshire Police to explain why the request is vexatious, I have decided to provide you with the thought process used for the application of Section 14, along with some of the Information Commissioner's guidance on its application.

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The FOIA is designed to give the public access to information held by public authorities. It exists to make the decisions of those authorities transparent but is not designed as a tool to be used on fishing expeditions for information. We are under no obligation to provide an explanation or comment on the information you require under the FOIA.

The leading case law on Section 14(1) Vexatious Requests can be found in the Upper Tribunal Case of [Information Commissioner vs Devon County Council and Dransfield \(2012\)](#), where it defines the purpose of Section 14 as follows:

'Section 14...is concerned with the nature of the request and has the effect of disapplying the citizen's right under Section 1(1)...The purpose of Section 14...must be to protect the resources (in the broadest sense of that word) of the public authority from being squandered on disproportionate use of FOIA...' (Paragraph 10).

The Information Commissioner's guidance on the application of Section 14(1) encourages public authorities to consider its use in any case where they believe the request is disproportionate, manifestly unjustified, inappropriate or an improper use of FOIA. This guidance can be found by following the below link:

www.ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guidance-index/freedom-of-information-and-environmental-information-regulations/dealing-with-vexatious-requests-section-14/

When deciding whether to make a request vexatious, an authority needs to consider a number of things, not to mention the four key broad themes considered by the Upper Tribunal in Dransfield which are as follows:

1. The burden (on the public authority and its staff);
2. The motive (of the requester);
3. The value or serious purpose (of the request); and
4. Any harassment or distress (of and to staff).

Whilst not directly questioning the motive of your request, I believe that fulfilling this request would create an unnecessarily disproportionate burden on the force compared to the value or purpose of the request and it is therefore, exempt from disclosure.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires the Wiltshire Police, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which: (a) states that fact, (b) specifies the exemption in question and (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

The exemption applicable to the information requested is:

Section 14(1) – Vexatious or repeated requests

Section (1) does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information if the request is vexatious. In accordance with Section 17 of the Act, this letter represents a Refusal Notice for this particular request.

Wiltshire Police would like to thank you for the interest that you have shown in the Force.

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I am satisfied that all the relevant information has been passed to me and been considered in the light of your request within the time constraints applicable under the legislation.

Wiltshire Police would like to thank you for the interest that you have shown in the Force.

Yours sincerely,

Force Disclosure Decision Maker

Wiltshire Police offers a re-examination of your case under its review procedure.



Force Disclosure Unit

Wiltshire Police HQ, London Road, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 2DN
Telephone 101

Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure

1. Who Can Ask for a Review

Any person who has requested information from Wiltshire Police, which has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act, is entitled to complain and request an internal review, if they are dissatisfied with the response they received.

2. How to Request a Review

Requests for review of a Freedom of Information request must be made in writing to the:

Force Disclosure Unit
Wiltshire Police Headquarters,
London Road, Devizes,
Wiltshire,
SN10 2DN

Email at disclosure@wiltshire.police.uk.

The reference number, date of the request and details of why the review is being requested must be included. Requests for review should be brought to the attention of the Force Disclosure Unit within 20 working days of the Force's response to the original FOI request.

3. Review Procedure

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing to include confirmation of the reasons for the review. The review will be conducted by another Decision Maker, who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Force Disclosure Unit will set a target date for a response. The response will be made as soon as is practicable with the intention to complete the review within twenty working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to 40 working days.

The Independent Decision Maker will conduct a review of the handling of the request for information and of decisions taken, including decisions taken about where the public interest lies in respect of exempt information where applicable. The review enables a re-evaluation of the case, taking into account the matters raised by the complaint.

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4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Decision Maker will reply to the complainant with the result of the review. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following the review, they should contact the Information Commissioner to make an appeal. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following details:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545 700
Fax: 01625 524 510
Email: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk