

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Decision notice

Date: 23 January 2014

Public Authority: Chief Constable
Address: Greater Manchester Police
P.O. Box 22
Manchester
M16 0RE

Decision (including any steps ordered)

1. The complainant requested information from Greater Manchester Police (GMP) about the cost of visits to its area by the Duke of Kent and the Countess of Wessex. GMP told the complainant that it does not hold any relevant information.
2. The Commissioner's decision is that, on the balance of probabilities, GMP does not hold the requested information. He requires no steps to be taken.

Request and response

3. On 27 June 2013 the complainant requested information about visits by the Duke of Kent and the Countess of Wessex:

"Please can you provide me (as a Freedom of information request) with the total cost of the Royal visit from the Duke of Kent on 30th May 2013 to Trafford Park and if possible, a breakdown of that cost?"

Please can you provide me (as a Freedom of information request) with the total cost of the Royal visit from the Countess of Wessex on 13th June 2013 to the Manchester (Halle Choir Ancoats Manchester, King fisher community special school, Oldham lancashire, super centre for women and children, royal Oldham hospital) area and if possible, a breakdown of that cost?"

1. *Security*

Including cost of police, risk assessments and health and safety considerations, road closures, crowd safety, barriers etc.

2. *Catering*

Including cost of food and drink, catering staff wages and equipment (hired and/or purchased) etc.

3. *Entertainment*

Including displays, technical equipment (hired and/or purchased), technical staff wages, music, Marque etc.

4. *Decoration*

Including cost of flowers or other decorations, guest books, commemorative plaques, building works (materials and staff wages) etc.

5. *Organisation*

Including cost of time spent by staff to arrange the visit, "rest" facilities, building hire, administration and stationary costs, cost of any gifts, mementos or souvenirs, transport and stewarding etc.

Please could you also inform me if any of the cost was met by any other organisations or bodies or if you received any donations to help meet the cost, or received any sponsorship, who this was from and how much was given?"

4. GMP responded on 25 July 2013. It denied holding the requested information, explaining that:

"I can confirm that the information you have requested is not held, as requested, by Greater Manchester Police, ie Greater Manchester Police have not incurred any identifiable costs. Any officers tasked to assist with the visits were tasked in their normal tour of duty and the costs of an officer's tour of duty are not recorded separately".

5. The complainant requested an internal review on 26 July 2013. GMP sent her the outcome of its internal review on 10 September 2013. It upheld its original position confirming that neither individual nor total costs associated with policing of the events to which the request relates are recorded by GMP.

Scope of the case

6. The complainant contacted the Commissioner on 16 September 2013 to complain about the way her requests for information had been handled.
7. Although the Commissioner understands that complainant submitted her requests for information as two separate requests, for the purposes of this decision notice, the Commissioner will refer to them as 'the request'.
8. The Commissioner considers the scope of his investigation to be whether GMP is correct to say that it does not hold the requested information.

Reasons for decision

Section 1 general right of access

9. Section 1 of FOIA states that:

"Any person making a request for information to a public authority is entitled –

(a) to be informed in writing by the public authority whether it holds information of the description specified in the request, and

(b) if that is the case, to have that information communicated to him."

10. In requesting an internal review, the complainant said:

"Surely Greater Manchester Police had a plan of how many officers it would need on the dayand what it costs Greater Manchester Police to employ those members of staff?"

11. Similarly, in bringing her complaint to the Commissioner's attention, the complainant said:

"I don't think that it is credible that they aren't keeping this info - or at least something close to it Also other Police authorities ... do hold this information and release it and surely police authorities must work in similar ways? They say the Police officers involved were carrying out duties as part of their core/general roles but a royal visit is not a day to day occurrence and so the Police officers involved would have been taken away from what they would have been otherwise doing that day, if there hadn't been a royal visit. And therefore that is a cost to the public".

12. The Commissioner finds it understandable that members of the public may well consider that such events need to be planned and separately budgeted for.
13. The Commissioner has sought to determine whether, on the balance of probabilities, GMP holds any relevant information which would enable it to answer the request. Applying the civil test of the balance of probabilities is in line with the approach taken by the Information Rights Tribunal when it has considered the issue of whether information is held in past cases.
14. In deciding where the balance of probabilities lies, the Commissioner will consider the searches carried out by the public authority, in terms of the extent of the searches, the quality of the searches, their thoroughness and results the searches yielded. He will also consider any other information or explanation offered by the public authority which is relevant to his determination.
15. The information at issue in this case comprises costing information relating to the specified visits.
16. GMP told the complainant:

"The officers utilised for the policing of these events (which includes any risk/health and safety assessments, planning, preparation and execution) were deployed as part of their core/general duties. No refreshments or other similar items as listed within your request were provided by GMP and therefore there is no information held by the force in relation to these items nor the costs of any other police resources used (such as vehicles)".
17. In its substantive response to the Commissioner, GMP provided further information regarding the basis on which a 'no information held' response was issued. This included providing the Commissioner with information about the nature of the searches conducted including details of the search terms used to locate any relevant electronic records. It also confirmed which business areas it had contacted, explaining:

"these would be the relevant business areas that may hold the requested information".
18. The Commissioner has considered the nature of the searches that have been conducted. He has also considered GMP's reasons for saying that the requested costing information is not held.
19. On the basis of the evidence provided to him, the Commissioner is satisfied that GMP does not hold the requested information.

Right of appeal

20. Either party has the right to appeal against this decision notice to the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights). Information about the appeals process may be obtained from:

First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights)
GRC & GRP Tribunals,
PO Box 9300,
LEICESTER,
LE1 8DJ

Tel: 0300 1234504

Fax: 0116 249 4253

Email: GRC@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/general-regulatory-chamber

21. If you wish to appeal against a decision notice, you can obtain information on how to appeal along with the relevant forms from the Information Tribunal website.
22. Any Notice of Appeal should be served on the Tribunal within 28 (calendar) days of the date on which this decision notice is sent.

Signed

Graham Smith
Deputy Commissioner
Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF