

30 January 2018

Freedom of Information Request - Reference No: 2018005

REQUEST

1. How many horses do you own, use or have access to, to perform policing duties or any other type of work.
2. In roughly what area are these horses kept.
3. How much have you paid to purchase/rent your horses.
4. What breeds of horses do you use.
5. How much was spent on staffing, bedding and feed.
6. How much have you spent on Farrier's. Veterinary, dental, chiropractor and alternative health on your horses.
7. How much is spent on PPE for the handler (please can you provide a breakdown for each type of item i.e. riding hat, body armour, safety footwear etc.).
8. How much is spent on tack for non-operational, normal patrol, public order, exercising etc.
9. Can you please provide details of any fitness exercise regimes you use.
10. Can you please provide any copies of templates of forms that you use for the care/maintenance/deployment of the horse.
11. What is your selection criteria for roles both paid and voluntary for people having access to and working with your horses.

RESPONSE

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires South Yorkshire 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 following exemption applies to the disclosure of the information:

Section 12(2) – Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

You have requested a significant amount of detailed information on a wide range of subject areas relating to the force mounted section. You have not specified a specific time period, but for ease we have assumed a minimum of one year.

I firstly approached our Mounted Police Section for assistance, some elements of your request were also referred to our Finance Department. In response, I have been advised that the information requested is held over various different sites and in different departments. In addition, specific items of equipment held by the Mounted Section do not have a specific shelf life, for example PPE, and as such it would be extremely difficult to establish and collate specific costs within the 18 hour cost threshold.

The Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 provide that the cost limit for non-central government public authorities is £450. This must be calculated at the rate of £25 per hour, providing an effective time limit of 18 hours. If you feel your endeavours can be achieved within the appropriate limit by refining your request, South Yorkshire Police would be more than happy to consider any further request.

Guidance from the Information Commissioner to public authorities is that where one part of a request is reasonably estimated to exceed the appropriate limit then the authority is not obliged to consider or comply with the remainder of the request up to the point at which the appropriate limit has been reached. Please note point 30 of the below link:-

https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1199/costs_of_compliance_exceeds_appropriate_limit.pdf

Although excess cost removes the force's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act, I have supplied information relating to some elements of your request as a gesture of goodwill. I trust this is helpful, but it does not affect our legal right to rely on the fees regulations for the remainder of your request neither does it bind South Yorkshire Police to any commitment that it will release information in such a manner in the future.

Our Operational Management Accountant has advised the following:

We purchase our horses as and when needed to replace retiring horses and they can vary considerably in cost from around £4,000 up to approximately £6,500.

In relation to the below questions in 2016/17 (the last full year we have) we spent a total of £31,317 on horse maintenance budget this includes all costs associated with the keep of the horses including vets, dental, saddle checks, farriers, bedding, feed and all equipment including blankets, tack etc. We are not able to provide a detailed breakdown of this spent without significant additional work being carried out to drill down into all the individual invoices and orders placed. We do not break down the costs of tack by its purpose e.g. non-operational, normal patrol and public order so cannot provide this level of detail.

In terms of staffing assuming the requestor did not mean operational mounted officers I would include in that the costs of the three grooms who care for the horses. Annual costs in 2016/17 were approximately £25k a mixture of temps through an agency and then temporary fixed term contract employed staff.