

13 September 2017

Freedom of Information Request - Reference No: 20171343

REQUEST

- 1, Number of Airwave talkgroups your force currently uses**
- 2, Callsign SOP & Procedure**
- 3, All callsigns as used by your force along with an explanation of what type of unit uses this callsign.**
- 4, Any policy or procedure in relation to "mapping" functionality of Airwave.**
- 5, A copy of the symbols used to depict different unit types on the mapping system.**

RESPONSE

In accordance with 1(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I can advise you that South Yorkshire Police holds information in relation to your request but I will not be providing you with this in full.

Questions 1 - 3

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 in relation to questions 1,2 & 3.

Section 31 (1) (a) (b) Law Enforcement states that information is exempt information if its disclosure under the Act would, or would likely to prejudice:

- a) The prevention or detection of crime;
- b) The apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

This exemption is a qualified and prejudice based exemption and therefore the legislators accept that there may be harm if released. The authority has to consider and describe the harm that would occur if a full disclosure of information were released.

HARM

Although there is no obvious harm in providing the number of airwave talk groups, call signs and procedures, there could very well be harm if this information were analysed and/or used by someone outside the force with malicious intent.

With regard to question 1, it is my understanding that there will be a difference in relation to the number of talk groups we proactively **use** as opposed to the number of talk groups we actually have. The number of airwave groups can also vary depending on the time of day

and the type of issues the force is dealing with at any one time. The provision of any information in this regard would be out of context and could very well be misleading; particularly if compared to other forces which will have a different number of officers and differences in the way in which officers are deployed.

It is also my opinion that releasing all the calls signs and the groups that are assigned to these, could be extremely disruptive to the force in the wrong hands. If, for example, a member of the public were to gain access to a police radio and use a call sign to infer credibility they could cause major disruption over the network. It could also allow criminals to try and disrupt local policing in order to facilitate crime. This could potentially compromise both the safety of officers and members of the public.

PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

The public interest test is assessed below. This considers and demonstrates whether or not it would be beneficial to the community to disclose the requested information.

Considerations favouring disclosure:

- **Accountability and Use of Public Funds:** There is a legitimate public interest in knowing that the force fulfils its policing functions effectively and efficiently in dealing with crime.
- **Public Awareness and Debate:** Provision of this information would reassure the public that South Yorkshire Police is actively policing the community and endeavouring to keep the public safe.

Considerations favouring non-disclosure:

- **Impact on police resources:** Police resources and the Force's ability to operate effectively and efficiently could be directly affected if this operational and strategic information were disclosed. This information has the potential to be manipulated by those with criminal intent who could disrupt the network and policing of communities if specific call signs for specific areas were widely communicated.

Balance

The Police Service is charged with enforcing the law, preventing and detecting crime and protecting the communities we serve. Although I am fully aware of the need for Public Authorities to demonstrate a level of openness and transparency, I am of the opinion that protecting our operational capability is a more compelling argument. South Yorkshire Police cannot risk compromising the ability of Officers to effectively carry out law enforcement and protect the public from those engaged in criminal activity.

Questions 4 & 5

Our Service Delivery Administrator within our Information Technology Services Department has provided information with regard to these questions and I cannot see any harm in its disclosure as follows:

Question 4

We do not have a policy and procedure in relation to a mapping functionality of Airwave. Nor is there a national policy or procedure in relation to this. Our formal response to this element of your request is therefore one of no information held.

Question 5

In respect of this question, I have been advised the following:

The ARLS system uses the below symbols



Green asterisk – taser equipped officer.



All other resource types are identified by the blue spot