

18th November 2020

Freedom of Information Request - Reference No: 20202322

REQUEST

I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information:

- 1. The amount spent by the force on Covid-conspiracy protests since March 2020. Where possible, please also break down these events by date and amount spent.***
- 2. The amount of arrests made related to Covid-19 conspiracy theories. Again, please provide dates where possible and highlight if arrests were made during planned events.***

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 – Exemption where cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit

I approached our COVID Team for assistance with your request, they have advised:

This would be a time consuming process which I believe would take well beyond 18hrs. This is because some protests are policed by the respective policing district during normal duty time. Therefore the expenditure is not recorded under any specific operation names. It would be necessary to speak with all policing districts and associated departments in an attempt to understand their bespoke response.

To clarify, the amount spent on protests like many other aspects of an Officers job role comes under normal policing duties. Normal policing duties do not have a specific cost code that could be checked. Also in the case of protests the Public Order Commander would assess details for an approaching protest and make the decision if this would be policed on a district level or if on a larger scale by the Public Order Team. If by district this would mainly be by officers during normal policing duties. If the Public Order Team are involved this may involve other officers who are brought in to increase the officer presence which may be given a financial code e.g. for OT or just do it in their normal working day.

In essence to attempt to locate and retrieve any recorded data on cost would require contacting all departments and units to find out, first if they have been involved in any protest policing out of their normal working day and then checking if a finance code was allocated to it. We do not record this information in a retrievable format the process to locate and retrieve it would take much longer than 18 hours' work.

Furthermore, in regards to Arrests, we record and retrieve Arrests stats by title not the reason behind them. To check for Arrests at protests would require checking every single Arrest on each date that is known a protest took place to see if any fit the criteria of your request.

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.

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