| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information ResponseOur reference: FOI 23-0132Responded to: 3rd February 2023 |
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Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

**Recently, a named person was used by Police Scotland as a civilian contractor to assess a working Police dog Bear at Larbert Police station. I believe it will be under his private company name of Vondervalken canine consultancy.**

**Please could I be supplied**

**1. How much was paid by Police Scotland for the work that a named individual carried out to assess Police dog Bear at Larbert Police station.**

I must respond in terms of Section 16 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 however, I am refusing to provide you with this information. Section 16 requires Police Scotland when refusing to provide such information because it is exempt, to provide you with a notice which:

* States that it holds the information,
* States that it is claiming an exemption,
* Specifies the exemption in question and
* States, if that would not be otherwise apparent, why the exemption applies.

I can confirm that Police Scotland holds the information requested. The exemption that I consider to be applicable is:

## Section 33(1)(b) - Commercial Interests

Specific cost information for services paid by Police Scotland cannot be provided as public disclosure of such information is likely to give competitive advantage to other similar companies and as a result would have a damaging impact on the company concerned.

However, if the information was disclosed this may, in the future, it may also reduce the number of companies tendering for the supply of goods and services, they being aware that the Police will disclose commercially sensitive information. This is likely to negatively impact on the service which ensures it purchases the most efficient and cost effective services in the future, and prejudice the commercial interests of Police.

This is a non-absolute exemption which requires the application of the Public Interest Test.

## Public Interest Test

Public Interest arguments in support of disclosure

* Would allow greater scrutiny of the way public funds are spent;
* Would increase accountability and transparency in terms of this spending;
* It is in the public interest for Police Scotland to procure services competitively, to ensure best value for money.

Public Interest arguments in support of withholding the information

* Would be commercially unfair to external suppliers;
* Could damage Police Scotland’s relationship with these suppliers;

## Public Interest Balancing Test

Police Scotland is a publicly funded organisation and therefore the Service has an obligation to obtain best value for money with particular services. Further, in order to do this, it is essential to maintain working relationships with these companies that tender their services.

As such, Police Scotland will not disclose any information that would impact on the ability to do both. The public interest would not be served if it were no longer possible to engage companies in a tender offer if they believed that conducting business with Police Scotland would result in their confidential financial information being released.

**2. The Police Scotland procurement policy relevant to the use of Private contractors or relevant to the situation as described above.**

I can confirm that as the value of the service cost less than £500, it did not require to be processed through Procurement. As stated in our Procurement Manual purchases less than £500 do not require formal quotations. I have provided the relevant extract of the manual below which would be considered the policy relevant in this case:

Very low value purchasing

For purchases less than £500, where there is no corporate contract in place, it is not necessary to seek multiple formal quotations. The cost of goods can be ascertained by telephone or e-mail and the evidence retained. Quoted prices should be challenged where it is believed best value is not being offered. The order should be placed via Purchasing Card where this facility is available and acceptable under the Purchase Card Policy, or by Purchase Order where this is not available.

**3. The procurement documents in relation to the selection process of using this particular firm as a private contractor and the other companies or individuals that took part in the procurement process.**

As noted in my answer to question 2, this purchase was not subject to a procurement process and therefore in terms of Section 17 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, this represents a notice that the information requested is not held by Police Scotland.

**4. How many times Police Scotland have used a private contractor to assess their police dogs behaviour (not including routine vet visits) and in what circumstances this has been done in the past.**

I can confirm that this information is not recorded by our dog unit. As such, in terms of Section 17 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, this represents a notice that the information requested is not held by Police Scotland.

If you require any further assistance please contact us quoting the reference above.

You can request a review of this response within the next 40 working days by email or by letter (Information Management - FOI, Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH). Requests must include the reason for your dissatisfaction.

If you remain dissatisfied following our review response, you can appeal to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner (OSIC) within 6 months - [online](http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal), by email or by letter (OSIC, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, KY16 9DS).

Following an OSIC appeal, you can appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

This response will be added to our [Disclosure Log](http://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log) in seven days' time.

Every effort has been taken to ensure our response is as accessible as possible. If you require this response to be provided in an alternative format, please let us know.