| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information Response Our reference: FOI 23-1876  Responded to: 1st August 2023 |
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Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

**Please provide copies of:**

**- the Operation Unicorn Debrief Report (item 6.2) referenced in the Strategic Leadership Board Discussion Summary minute of Tuesday 7 March 2023.**

Please be advised that the requested information is publicly available.

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

(a) states that it holds the information,

(b) states that it is claiming an exemption,

(c) specifies the exemption in question and

(d) states, if that would not be otherwise apparent, why the exemption applies.

I can confirm that Police Scotland holds the information that you have requested and the exemption that I consider to be applicable is set out at Section 25(1) of the Act - information otherwise accessible:

“Information which the applicant can reasonably obtain other than by requesting it under Section 1(1) is exempt information”

I can confirm that the information requested is available through the website of the Scottish Policy Authority. I have attached a direct link to the relevant document below:

[Organisational Learning Operation Unicorn & Talla - spa.police.uk](https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/1qqhwnhl/item-10-organisational-learning-operation-unicorn-talla.pdf)

**- the report referenced in item 3.1 in the minute of the Strategic Leadership Board Discussion Summary on Monday 6 March 2023:**

**"ACC Ritchie presented a report to members detailing the 16,600 target in Police Officer numbers and provided options on how this could be achieved, with option 3 being the preferred option."**

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

(a) states that it holds the information,

(b) states that it is claiming an exemption,

(c) specifies the exemption in question and

(d) states, if that would not be otherwise apparent, why the exemption applies.

I can confirm that Police Scotland holds the information you have requested and the exemption that I consider to be applicable is set out at:

Section 30(c) - Prejudice to the Effective Conduct of Public Affairs

Section 31(1) – National Security and Defence

Section 35(1)(a)&(b) – Law Enforcement

Section 39(1) – Health, safety and the environment

## Section 30(c) - Prejudice to the Effective Conduct of Public Affairs

The information under consideration comprises analysis, risks and discussion of an ongoing process in relation to officer numbers.

In this instance Police Scotland consider that release of the above requested information, at this point in the process, would limit its ability to conduct its business effectively and as such disclosure ‘would otherwise prejudice substantially, or be likely to prejudice substantially, the effective conduct of public affairs’.

Section 30(c) is a broad exemption, however, there must be at least a significant probability that substantial prejudice would occur.

Police Scotland believe that disclosure of the information into the public domain, at this time and stage of the process would have a significant disrupting effect on both the ongoing process and to our officers and staff.

Police Scotland are still actively working through the options and implications of the officer and staff reductions on the organisation, as well as developing and considering what service delivery model(s) we need to introduce. Release of the material at this stage of the process would have a disrupting effect on both the ongoing process and to our officers and staff.

## Public Interest Test

In this instance the above exemption is non-absolute and I must go on to consider the public interest in relation to the information. This means assessing whether, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest is better served by disclosing or withholding the information.

In this instance it is recognised that disclosure of this information would favour release in terms of accountability and the need for transparency in the use of public funds.

That said, a disclosure under the Act is a disclosure to the world at large and I must consider the impact release of this information would have on the smooth running of the Service and the impact any disclosure would have on these processes.

I would contend that disclosure of the requested information, at this time, would be harmful in that it would interfere with the ongoing process in relation to police resourcing and the discussions in relation to this.

## Section 31(1) – National Security and Defence

## Section 35(1)(a)&(b) – Law Enforcement

## Section 39(1) – Health, safety and the environment

Part of the information requested relates to risks associated with the options proposed.

If the information is disclosed it may assist terrorist organisations along with criminals to identify, with some accuracy, potential changes to police focus or tactics and therefore take steps to prepare for such changes. This would provide them with a tactical advantage when planning or perpetrating their terrorist plans and criminal activities allowing them to cause the maximum impact of destruction and disruption.

It would also allow criminals to plan how best to engage or occupy existing police resources in an effort to maximise their chances of committing serious crime, therefore harming the efficient and effective conduct of the service.

The security of the United Kingdom is of paramount importance and Police Scotland will not disclose further details of such information if it would impact on National Security.

All of these factors would increase the risk to the personal safety of individuals and also the safety of the police officers responding to incidents.

These are non-absolute exemptions and require the application of the public interest test.

## Public Interest Test

As you will be aware, the exemptions listed above are non-absolute and require the application of the Public Interest Test. I would suggest that public accountability would favour disclosure, given that the information concerns the efficient and effective use of resources by the Service. Likewise, disclosure of the information would also inform the public debate on the issue of policing and contribute to the accuracy of that debate.

Furthermore, the applicability of the exemptions listed above, the need to ensure the effective conduct of the service in relation to prevention and detection of crime and, the public safety considerations involved in the delivery of operational policing clearly favour non-disclosure of the information requested.

It is important to note that the UK does face a serious and sustained threat from violent extremists and this threat is greater in scale and ambition than any terrorist threats in the past. The police service has a duty to promote the safety of all individuals, whether protected or not, and will not reveal any information that might jeopardise this goal. To provide details of specific risks the police service may face is likely to place individuals at serious and increased risk.

On balance I would contend that the public interest in disclosing the information is outweighed by that in maintaining the exemptions listed, as, it is doubtful if it can ever be in the public interest to disclose information which would jeopardise the delivery of policing and the safety of individuals and prejudice the prevention or detection of crime.

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](mailto:foi@scotland.police.uk) 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](mailto:enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info) 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.