



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

Our Ref: FOI 17277
Your Ref: FOI 17137
Date: 20 September 2024

Internal Review

Re: Request for internal review of response to application for information under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, original request first notified to Staffordshire Police on 09/08/2024

We refer to the above request which was expressed in the following terms:

'As a resident in the Lichfield area we are part of a number of Facebook groups for the Community... it is becoming clear, and having been a victim first hand of vehicle theft, particularly motorhomes / campervans, that the Police (Staffordshire) are particularly impotent in tracing, recovery and catching / breaking up criminals and the chain required for vehicle theft disposal. From my personal experience the words I would use to describe them would be 'nice, slow, ineffective'.

I write to you to ask what is the policy on this matter, what the statistics are for vehicle theft, by type of vehicle, recovery figures, what happens to / where do stolen vehicles go....

At present there is certainly a loss of confidence in the ability of the Staffordshire police, and a wider matter for the UK as a whole in actually being effective in deterring, breaking up, disrupting, catching and prosecuting criminals and associated gangs and the recovery of vehicles.'

Further to the above, we also note the following comments made within your request for Internal Review.

Thank you for your response, disappointing as it is... In my email correspondence I had asked what data you could share and how much you were able to send / hold.

I respect that if you have paper records or a database that cannot support a simple extraction of data that the request could be labour intensive.

If the fields, such as vehicle type are held then an extraction into XL would allow for manipulation and analysis.

The reason for my request is simple, and you have already touched upon it in your response... specifically :

'At present there is certainly a loss of confidence in the ability of the Staffordshire police, and a wider matter for the UK as a whole in actually being effective in deterring, breaking up, disrupting, catching and prosecuting criminals and associated gangs and the recovery of vehicles'.

It is also concerning that if this data is not already available then it is not possible for Mr Adams to accurately measure how he is improving the situation, clearly not having a baseline or a means to assess the situation through time.

If we have to boil this down to plain speaking, I, along with many others in the community have no confidence in Staffordshire Police to reduce vehicle thefts, such as motorhomes / campervans, to work effectively with neighbouring Forces and that the use of ANPR is simply circumvented by the use of false / cloned plates, and any statistics given by the PCC are just smoke and mirrors.

In addition there is no detail about recovery rates, what happens to stolen vehicles, convictions etc... this leads to concern about a lack of transparency, coupled with a question over Force ability, and now an inability to produce basic data for baseline and measurement and goal / objective targets underscores your comments about 'loss of confidence'.

Given your constraints of '18 hours' I ask you what is the art of the possible. I look forward to hearing from you so that we can begin rebuilding confidence.

Our Response

Upon review of your request for information under the Freedom of Information provision referenced above and all corresponding communication, we are of the opinion that the response issued, alongside all clarification provided, fully answers the terms of your request.

We also confirm that the application of all exemptions outlined within this response are fully justified, and that the explanations and rationale for their application conveyed clearly and unequivocally.

However, in order to clarify the application of Section 12, where any part of the request exceeds the time and cost threshold then the whole request will be deemed to fall above the time and cost constraints as outlined within the Act. However, where this is the case, then assistance should be offered to an applicant upon how their request may be pared down to fall within those constraints.

In this instance, I can confirm that an offer of refinement was made and instructions provided to the following effect.

'In order to assist in refining your request, data can be provided for where the offence has been recorded as the 'Theft Act 1968, Section 12'. Likewise, we may be able to provide the total of vehicles seized for recovery for 2023 and 2024 and what happens to stolen vehicles.'

Therefore, were you to refine and resubmit your request, we could provide the overall number of 'Theft of a vehicle' offences and the total number of seized vehicles for 2023 & 2024 along with the outcome for these vehicles. Whilst we are unable to provide this data broken down by 'vehicle type', without exceeding the time and cost constraints, it would be possible to provide the make and model of the vehicles stolen - where this has been recorded. We could also provide a response in relation to your query regarding our policy in this area. However, please note that further exemptions may apply.

Where collation and presentation of data is requested, it is important to note that extraction may often be required from multiple sources, each developed for specific policing purposes and for which data extraction methods have not been specifically designed to directly correlate with the

terminology of any given Freedom of Information Request. Therefore, any such systems are constrained by the purposes for which they were specifically designed.

The Freedom of Information Act exists to allow members of the public to request recorded information held by publicly funded bodies. The information requested needs to be identified, described in full and articulated to the body from which the information is being requested. The Act is not the correct channel through which complaints can be resolved, or the correct forum through which opinions or matters of conjecture can be debated.

Please note that the FOI Act 2000 only extends to requests for recorded information. It does not require public authorities to answer questions generally; only if they already hold the answers in recorded form.

Please be advised that all FOI requests and response letters are published on the Staffordshire Police website although personal details are not included.

If you are not content with the outcome of the review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner to investigate. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

ICO Website for complaints link: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/foi-and-eir-complaints/foi-and-eir-complaints/>

Central Disclosure Unit Management Team
Central Disclosure Unit
Staffordshire Police