

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO 2017-005

Your request has now been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act) and we provide our response below.

You asked:

I have been informed that the Police Central Garage has arbitrarily been moved from Ferndown to Weymouth and it has been impossible to sell the old Garage. Under the Freedom of Information Act would you tell me how much this is costing the taxpayer and the rationale, given that the vast majority of the Dorset population live in the Bournemouth/Poole area and hence one would assume most crime committed here?

Your request for information has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act) and our response is as follows:

In general terms the decision and rationale behind the decision to dispose of the Ferndown Divisional HQ site was made public in September 2014 and published on both the Dorset Police and Dorset PCC's website (links below). The decision was also widely reported in the local media, including the BBC (link also below):

<https://www.dorset.pcc.police.uk/dorset-pcc-news-blog/news-and-blog/2014/09/changes-to-counter-service-provision-and-sale-of-ferndown-approved/>

<https://www.dorset.police.uk/news-information/news-archive/changes-to-counter-service-provision-and-sale-of-ferndown-hq-approved/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-dorset-29259388>

As you rightly point out the workshop was built specifically for the maintenance and support of the Dorset Police vehicle fleet as was the facility in Weymouth. Over the years both facilities have provided an excellent service to the Force; however a review of the function, staffing requirements, servicing and maintenance requirements identified that the maintenance of the fleet could all be undertaken in a single workshop. This resulted in direct savings in terms of the management and supervision, better coverage allowing the flexibility to extend the operating hours whilst maintaining safe working conditions and exploiting the benefits of the Weymouth PFI scheme under which the provider of the buildings has a responsibility for the maintenance and repair of the workshop for a further 15 years, together with a legacy responsibility to warranty the infrastructure for 10 years past the end of the contract. Thus the ongoing costs of utilising Ferndown are much reduced.

You are correct in terms of Ferndown being closer to a large centre of population; however Weymouth, Bridport and Dorchester all have significant policing demands requiring a vehicle fleet and the nature of the vehicles in that area are such that they generally undertake higher mileage than would be typical in the conurbation leading to different patterns of service and demand.

In total terms the cost of decanting the workshop from Ferndown to Weymouth was £222,900. This covered the installation of additional equipment and the purchase of a vehicle transporter. The annual saving arising through this purely on the revenue costs is £91,800 as we have been able to reduce the establishment.

In summary, the decision to relocate the Dorset Police Workshop from Ferndown to create a single facility to cover the Force area based on the existing PFI premise in Weymouth has resulted in an initial cost of £222,900 offset by an annual saving of £91,800 resulting in a pay back of 29 months after which there will be an annual saving to the Force budget of £91,800.