

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO 2022-02

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

You asked:

1. Please could you provide a full list of property owned by the Police and Crime Commissioner with addresses, could you please include details where joint ownership or similar agreement exists between the PCC and other organisations such as a neighbouring police force.
2. Please could you provide a full list of property rented or leased by the Police and Crime Commissioner with addresses, used for a policing purpose or residential use by your police force.
3. In the past 12 months has your force rented any properties on a short-term basis and if so could you please provide details including rent paid and any deposits or similar provided as part of the rental or lease of the property.
4. During the same period has the PCC disposed of any buildings previously used for policing or in support of policing, if so please provide details of the building(s) disposed of.
5. Can you provide details of how buildings and estate are managed by the PCC on behalf of Policing within your force area?

For clarity when I refer to property I mean buildings such as bases, offices, police stations, or other buildings used in support of a policing purpose.

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

I can provide you with a full response to questions 4 and 5 below.

4. The PCC has not disposed of any buildings previously used for policing or in support of policing in the last 12 months.

5. The Police and Crime Commissioner has delegated the management of the police buildings and estate to the Head of Estates for Dorset Police. This arrangements for this are described within the Code of Corporate Governance, Part 3B (28) - Scheme of Delegation published on our website using the following link.

In relation to questions 1, 2 and 3, in accordance with the Section 17(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) this letter acts as a Refusal Notice for **part** of your request.

The exemptions applied are:

- Section 31(1)(a) – The prevention and detection of crime
- Section 31(1)(b) – The apprehension or prosecution of offenders

Sections 31 requires the application of a Prejudice Test and a Public Interest Test before the exemption can be claimed.

The Prejudice and Public Interest Tests have been applied as follows:

Prejudice (harm) test

Disclosure of details relating to buildings used for the purposes of discreet or covert policing work would be harmful to those employees working within those buildings and to the work they are conducting.

The success of criminal investigations is very often dependent on the use of covert techniques and methodology. The individuals involved in this type of activity, or any individual suspected of being so involved, would have their safety put at risk, if information were released that could identify any individual or policing activity.

Many criminals are constantly active and astute in their assessment of police capabilities and will capitalise on any information they can glean about police activities. Using the information to compromise policing methods will assist their offending behaviour. For example, disclosing that a particular site, which a criminal has seen an associate enter, is occupied by the police could compromise that person be they an undercover officer or someone supplying information to the police.

Disclosing the locations of discreet or covert police buildings would lead to those premises being targeted by criminals in a bid to disrupt the policing activity taking place and gain access to information that would enable them to avoid detection, apprehension and subsequent prosecution. If these buildings were compromised it would undermine current operations and initiatives, covert policing tactics and sources.

Public interest test

For – S31

Disclosure of this information would be of interest to the public as it will provide a more complete picture of how the resources of Dorset Police are spread throughout the region. This would enable the public to judge whether they consider this organisation to be spending public funds effectively in terms of estate management and distribution.

Against – S31

Where current or future law enforcement of the force may be compromised by the release of information the public interest is likely to favour non-disclosure as it is in the public's interest to have criminals brought to justice.

Disclosure of this information would have a negative impact on the effectiveness of dealing with offenders that require the use of the police service's unpublicised law enforcement tactics as these buildings would become targets of crime. If these buildings were put under surveillance or broken into, the information obtained would lead to an increase in high profile crime due to the advantage such information would give the criminal fraternity and this would not be in the public's interest.

Balance Test

After considering the most salient points on each side of the argument above, I do not consider that the benefits in disclosure outweighs the harm that could be caused by disclosing this information. The public interest falls in favour non-disclosure and so the information is exempt.

However, I partial responses to questions 1, 2 and 3 are below.

1 & 2. Property owned by the Police and Crime Commissioner is already available within the public domain. The information can be found on the Asset Register available using following web address and link:

www.dorset.pcc.police.uk/information-hub/publication-scheme/lists-and-registers/

3. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner hold no information regarding the short-term renting or leasing of property on behalf of Dorset Police in the past 12 months.

I regret that I am unable to meet your request in full but should you have any further information needs in the future then please contact me.”