

Response to Callsigns request

Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service can confirm that information in relation to your request is held however its disclosure is exempt by virtue of the following exemption

- Section 24(1) National Security

Harm in providing the Information held

To provide the individual call signs for specific departments could undermine national security. It would allow those with ill intent to cause disruption to the emergency network. Knowing call signs and associated information for specific areas would allow individuals to speak on the fire network with a level of validity that could lead to major disruption to the force communications network. It would also aid criminals in disrupting events involving these areas. Similarly releasing an inventory list of equipment has led in the past to a spate of criminal activity in the theft of some items from service vehicles which would disrupt the smooth running of the operational vehicles in the Service.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure:

To disclose this information would adhere to the basic principle of being open and transparent.

Factors favouring non-disclosure:

Releasing such data would give those individuals with the intent to do so, the intelligence required to disrupt the activity of emergency services. This knowledge would allow those with ill intent to target their offending more effectively which would inevitably lead to an increased likelihood of criminal activity and an increased danger to the public. Any disclosure of information which is likely to undermine the ability to maintain public safety crime can only be considered as being harmful to the public and not in the public interest.

Balancing Test

A disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act is a disclosure to the world at large, therefore information that is disclosed must be suitable to be disclosed to anyone.

When considering whether disclosure is appropriate, I must weigh the strongest reason for disclosure against the strongest reasons for non-disclosure. In this case, whilst the factors favouring disclosure are important in that it would adhere to the basic principle of being open and transparent, I believe when weighed against the risk of disclosure undermining our ability to protect the public and respond effectively to emergencies, then non-disclosure takes precedence.

The Information Commissioners Office confirm that they recognise that terrorists can be highly motivated and may go to great lengths to gather intelligence. This means there may be grounds for withholding seemingly harmless information on the basis that it may assist terrorists when pieced together with other information they may obtain.