



Information Governance Team

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14 March 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

**Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)
Request ID: FOI401338081**

Thank you for your request for information relating to School Crossing Patrol Officers.

You have requested the following information:

I would like this information for each of the last 7 calendar years as follows: 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022.

- 1. I would like to know the number of staff recruited and employed to be Crossing Guards or School Crossing Patrol Officers (also known as Lollipop people) by your Local Authority.**
- 2. I would like the total number of sites school crossing patrol officers operated at.**
- 3. I would also like the approximate vacancy rate across each year.**

For Questions 1, 2 and 3, please see the attached document.

4. Finally, I would also like to know the total budget spent on school crossing support officers.

Regarding Question 4, the Council believes this is exempt from disclosure under Section 43(2) - Commercially Sensitive information. Section 43(2) exempts information from disclosure where disclosure of that information would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (an individual, a company, the public authority itself or any other legal entity).

It is the Council's position that its own commercial interests would be prejudiced by the disclosure of the requested information. Coventry City Council sells the service to schools and receives income, although the Council does subsidise the service.

The exemption at s 43(2) is qualified, and therefore subject to a public interest test. Even where a qualified exemption is engaged it can only be applied where the public interest in withholding information outweighs that in favour of releasing it. In applying the public interest test the Council have given careful consideration to the arguments for and against disclosure.

Part 1 – Arguments in Favour of Disclosure

1. Promote accountability and transparency for the Council's decisions and in its spending of public money
2. Assist the public to understand and challenge our decisions
3. Inform the public of the activities carried out on their behalf, allowing for more user involvement and collaborative decision making
4. Enable the public to better scrutinise the public monies spent

Part 2 – Arguments Against Disclosure

1. There is a public interest in allowing public authorities to withhold information which if disclosed, would reduce providers' ability to compete in a commercial environment, for the reasons given above
2. The successful parties operate in a competitive market. If prejudicing the commercial interests of the successful tenderers/companies in the market would distort competition in that market, this in itself would not be in the public interest
3. There is a public interest in protecting the commercial interests of the Council and ensuring it is able to compete fairly: "If the commercial secrets of one of the players in the market were revealed then its competitive position would be eroded and the whole market would be less competitive with the result that the public benefit of having an efficient competitive market would be to some extent eroded" (taken from the decision of the (then) *Information Tribunal in Visser v ICOEA/2011/0188* at paragraph 20)
4. Revealing information such as a pricing mechanism can be detrimental to a provider's commercial interest. If an organisation has knowledge of a provider's business model, it can exploit this for its own commercial interest.

The Balancing Exercise

Having taken into account the arguments for and against disclosure, the Council has decided that the public interest in this case is best served by maintaining the exemption under section 43(2) FOIA and by not disclosing the information requested.

The Council considers that the possible benefits of disclosure are outweighed by the real risk of causing prejudice to the commercial interests of the Council itself.

The supply of information in response to a FOI/EIR request does not confer an automatic right to re-use the information. You can use any information supplied for the purposes of private study and non-commercial research without requiring further permission. Similarly, information supplied can also be re-used for the purposes of news reporting. An exception to this is photographs. Please contact us if you wish to use the information for any other purpose.

For information, we publish a variety of information such as: [FOI/EIR Disclosure Log](#), [Publication Scheme](#), [Facts about Coventry](#) and [Open Data](#) that you may find of useful if you are looking for information in the future.

If you are unhappy with the handling of your request, you can ask us to review our response. Requests for reviews should be submitted within 40 days of the date of receipt of our response to your original request – email: infogov@coventry.gov.uk

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our review, you can write to the Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or email icocasework@ico.org.uk.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in your response.

Yours faithfully

Information Governance

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1. I would like to know the number of staff recruited and employed to be Crossing Guards or School Crossing Patrol Officers (also known as Lollipop people) by your Local Authority.
2. I would like the total number of sites school crossing patrol officers operated at.
3. I would also like the approximate vacancy rate across each year.

Please see the table below:

| <p><u>Explanatory information:</u> The School Crossing Patrol Service would be funded by schools paying for the Patrols. This was due to commence during 2015 but actually commenced from January 2016. At this time, we had 148 sites with many sites vacant or obsolete, so a review was undertaken to establish viable sites. We had 85 viable sites, but these were not all staffed.</p> <p>We do not hold all the information and therefore we are advising you as per Section 1(1) of the Act. Some of the records have now been deleted in line with our Retention and Disposal Schedule.</p> <p>To assist we have provided the information below however please note this information is a 'snapshot in time'. Over the course of a year with a high number of staff, there are people leaving and people being recruited. This is much less as the number of employees reduces though, so is more stable in more recent years. Recruitment is an issue however this is a national issue, not just a local problem.</p> | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| Year | Number of Standby Patrols and School Crossing Patrols employed | Number of sites | Vacancies |
| 2015 | Approximately 62 sites were staffed at this time | 148 down to 85 viable sites (not all staffed) | Approximately 62 of 85 sites were staffed although we did not recruit to some of these 85 sites – 23 vacancies (27% vacancy) |
| | Schools started paying for the service from January 2016 – we went from 85 viable sites to 41 | | |
| 2016 | 41- 4 standbys and 37 Patrols | 41 | 4 (9.76% vacancies) |
| 2017 | 36 (@ 01/01/2017) – 4 standbys and 32 Patrols | 37 | 5 (13.5 % vacancies) |

| | | | |
|-------------|--|---|---|
| 2018 | 26 (@ 01/01/2018) - 2 standbys and 24 Patrols | 27 | 3 (12.5% vacancies) |
| 2019 | 21 (@ 01/01/2019) – 1 standby and 20 Patrols | 24 | 4 (16.67% vacancies) |
| 2020 | 18 (@ 01/01/2020) – 1 standby and 17 Patrols | 20 | 3 (15% vacancies) |
| 2021 | 18 (@ 01/01/2021) – 1 standby and 17 Patrols | 20 | 3 (15% vacancies) |
| 2022 | 16 @ 01/01/2022, but now 17 as new starter 28/02/2022 | 19 at 01/01/2022 but from 01/04/2022 - 18 | From 01/04/2022, 2 vacancies on 18 sites so 11% |