

Response to Request for Information

Reference FOI 001590
Date 20 October 2017

Void Properties

Request:

I am looking for information on both residential and commercial properties.

1. How many void properties do you have?
The City of Wolverhampton Council currently has 40 void properties.
2. How many of them are occupied by Guardians?
In response to your question, we can confirm that the department holds information that you have asked for, but in this case we will not be providing it to you as it is exempt from disclosure.

We are not obliged to provide information if its release would prejudice law enforcement as defined under Freedom of Information Act, Section 31(1)(a) – Law Enforcement. In this case, we believe that releasing detailed information such as void properties creates a security risk and is likely to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime.

In line with the terms of this exemption in the Freedom of Information Act, we have also considered whether it would be in the public interest for us to provide you with the information, despite the exemption being applicable. In this case, we have concluded that the public interest favours withholding the information.

You can find out more about Section 31 by reading the extract from the Act and some guidance points we consider when applying this exemption, attached at the end of this letter.

You can also find more information by reading the full text of the Act, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/31> and further guidance

When assessing whether or not it was in the public interest to disclose the information to you, we took into account the following factors:

Public interest considerations favouring disclosure

- There is public interest in transparency and accountability of the department,
- Disclosure may promote public understanding
- There is public interest in good decision-making by public bodies

Public interest considerations favouring withholding the information

Disclosing the void properties creates a security risk and therefore the Council recognises that there is a public interest in reducing potential criminal activity at these properties especially owned by private individuals.

In reaching this decision we have referred to the ICO Decision Notices as listed below:

https://ico.org.uk/media/action-weve-taken/decision-notices/2014/1042144/fs_50538789.pdf

<https://ico.org.uk/media/action-weve-taken/decision-notices/2017/2013677/fs50623497.pdf>

3. How many of them are secured using other means?
As above.
4. Please provide addresses for each property and specify security measures for each?
As above.
5. How much are you spending each year on non-guardian occupied property security?
Given the above, under section 31(1)(a) of the FOIA, we neither confirm nor deny we hold the information you have requested.

Section 31(1) - Information which is not exempt information by virtue of section 31 is exempt information if its disclosure under the Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice

(a) the prevention and detection of crime.

6. How long have you been using Guardian Services if at all?
As above.
7. Do you use one Guardian Company or several, if at all?
As above.
8. What Guardian Company/Companies are you using, if at all?
As above.
9. Is the Guardian Services contract procured by tender or considered on a building by building basis?
As above.
10. Is your other security services contract procured by tender or considered on a building by building basis?
As above.