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Public Interest Test

Freedom of Information

Section 43 – Commercial Interests

Harm

Disclosure of such information is commercially sensitive because it includes trade secrets that if revealed, may place the involved company at a disadvantage by sharing those secrets with competitors. Disclosure would be likely to harm the current company's purchasing process. Releasing this information would be likely to give competitors an advantage in future estate sales, or in the event that this estate sale falls through. If any details within the sale were revealed then it may lead to the current company to losing the contract.

Factors Favouring Disclosure

There may be some public interest in revealing details involved in this estate sale and business plans for the building. Revealing information of this sale may inspire any future applications for other estate sales by different companies. It is important that West Midlands Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) are held accountable for any decisions that are made that may affect estate sales.

Factors Favouring Non-Disclosure

Disclosure would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of the company involved and affect future sales for WMP and OPCC. In addition, revealing this information would have a negative effect on the relationship between the company and the OPCC/WMP. Some of the information that has been redacted contains trade secrets of the company, and releasing these would place that business at risk from competitors.

Balancing Test

For a public interest test, issues that favour release need to be measured against issues that favour non-disclosure. The public interest is not what interests the public, or a particular individual, but what will be the greater good, if released, to the community as a whole.

The issues supporting disclosure have been considered however, on balance, it is considered that the public interest lies in not disclosing the information. This is due to the harm it would cause this ongoing sale, and in any future sale processes, and the ongoing relationship between the OPCC and West Midlands Police and the involved company.

There is a strong need for this Office to be able to provide advice and guidance to possible purchasers without fear of these being made public, especially when it could have an adverse effect on the integrity and effectiveness of operational policing.

The OPCC want to maintain the quality of the service provided. The high quality of service provided is obviously in the interest of the wider public.