

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

[REDACTED]
(By email)

Our Ref: MGLA260219-6515

25 March 2019

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request for information which the Greater London Authority (GLA) received on 25 February 2019. Your request has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You requested:

Please could I have the following information: -

- 1) what proportion of the responses to the Mayor's social media posts ask him to do something to reduce the rate of stabbings and other murders of teenagers and other young people in London?*
- 2) in the last two years how many times has the Mayor met with officers of command rank in the Metropolitan police to discuss how the murder rate in London's streets can be reduced and for how long?*
- 3) how many times and for how long have the Mayor and/or any of his direct reports met with Police Scotland or representatives of Glasgow City Council or the Scottish Government to learn about the very successful violence scheme in Glasgow?*

Keeping all Londoners safe is the Mayor's number one priority. He believes that the level of violent crime is clearly unacceptable, and is leading a relentless focus on both arresting violent offenders and tackling the root causes of violence. The Mayor's social media channels – alongside other forms of communication – are regularly used to inform Londoners about all of the work that is being done to tackle serious violence in London. Some of which is outlined below.

In April last year the Metropolitan Police set up the Violent Crime Taskforce – funded by City Hall – with nearly 300 police officers focused on the worst affected areas.

In September the Mayor established London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) – with the goal of stabilising violent crime and bringing about a long-term reduction in violence in London through tackling its root causes. The VRU is bringing together local councils, the health service, community groups and other key partners across London to work on a shared approach to preventing people from turning to violent crime in the first place. You can read more about the Violence Reduction Unit at www.london.gov.uk/VRU

In 2018 the Mayor also created the Young Londoners Fund – a £45 million fund focused on providing young people with positive alternatives to crime and to help Londoners to get out of gangs and violence and into employment and training. Programmes from round 1 of the fund went live in 2018, with round 2 applications opening in May 2019.

In November 2017 the Mayor launched the #LondonNeedsYouAlive campaign - which brings together role models, communities and schools to encourage young people away from carrying a knife, focusing on their talent and worth to the capital. To date this campaign has been viewed 4,043,390 times by young Londoners. The #LondonNeedsYouAlive educational toolkit has been downloaded over 2,000 times and has been implemented by over 100 schools and youth groups across London.

The causes of violent crime are extremely complex and involve deep-seated problems like poverty, inequality, social alienation and a lack of opportunities for young people.

This has been made far worse by the Government's huge cuts to the police and preventative services like youth services, local councils and charities across our city.

As a direct consequence, the number of police officers on our streets has fallen to the lowest level in 15 years and London has seen the decimation of the very services that help to address the root causes of crime.

Please find below our response to each part of your request.

1) What proportion of the responses to the Mayor's social media posts ask him to do something to reduce the rate of stabbings and other murders of teenagers and other young people in London?

Unfortunately, to provide the information you have requested would exceed the 'appropriate limit' of £450 set by the Freedom of Information (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004.

Under section 12 of the FOI Act, we are not obliged to comply with a request if the cost of determining whether we hold the information, locating and retrieving it and extracting it from other information would exceed the appropriate limit. This is calculated at £25 per hour for every hour spent on the activities described and equates to 18 hours of work.

We have estimated that it would take at least 40 hours total to locate and extract the information you have requested (but potentially much more once we have analysed the correct period of time this exercise should cover).

To provide this information would involve first downloading responses to Mayoral feed posts – currently over 12,000 responses in the previous 7 days. We would then develop a group of words – a text corpus - to match the text of the response against in order to identify meaningful groupings and filter out unneeded data. This process may have to be repeated a number of times in order to improve and refine the results. The remaining data would be grouped by the original Mayoral post the response is to, so the human scanning the response would have the context to decide if the responder was fulfilling the statement of the FOI. Then a group or member of staff would read this data and assign it accordingly. The member of staff may need to refer cases for a second viewing where the response is not immediately obvious, for example many responses will be to a Mayoral post on a completely different topic.

It may be feasible to do this for a one day period if there is a particular date that you are interested in.

2) In the last two years how many times has. The Mayor met with officers of command rank in the Metropolitan police to discuss how the murder rate in London's streets can be reduced and for how long?

3) How many times and for how long have the Mayor and/or any of his direct reports met with Police Scotland or representatives of Glasgow City Council or the Scottish Government to learn about the very successful violence scheme in Glasgow?

We are unable to provide a figure for how many people the Mayor has met with. the Mayor meets and speaks regularly with the Commissioner and other Command level officers. We do not itemise who he meets and speaks to at all meetings and events. However, formal scheduled meetings are captured in the Mayor's diary, which is published on the GLA's website.

In line with our publication scheme, the Mayor's diary is published on our website twice a year. The GLA has just published the Mayor's diary covering the period May 2018 to October 2018. The next publication of the diary will be in approximately 6 months and will include dates from November 2018-April 2019.

<https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/governance-and-spending/sharing-our-information/publication-scheme/mayor-londons-diary>

We therefore consider that this information is exempt information under section 22 of the Act as it constitutes information intended for future publication.

Section 22 of the Act provides an exemption for information that is intended to be published in the future. Information is exempt if, at the time when the public authority receives a request for it:

- the public authority holds the requested information;
- the public authority intends the information to be published at some future date, whether that
- date is determined or not; and
- in all the circumstances it is reasonable to withhold the information until its planned publication.

Section 22 acknowledges that public authorities must have freedom to be able to determine their own publication timetables. This allows them to deal with the necessary preparation, administration and context of publication. It is however necessary to consider whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption (and withholding the information until the publication date), is greater than the public interest in releasing the information before this date.

In this instance, it is felt that there is a greater public interest for the GLA to keep to its original timetable of disclosure. The decision to publish the Mayor's diary on a six month basis was made in order to allow the Mayor's office to effectively manage their workload and the work required to prepare such a large amount of information for publication.

The decision to proactively publish the Mayor's diary demonstrates the GLA's commitment to openness and transparency and we believe a six month publication cycle for this information is appropriate. The public interest in the release of the Mayor's meetings and key engagements is also met by the more regular publication of the Mayor's report.

The public interest - i.e. the best interests of the public - is met by the GLA being open and transparent, but also by managing its resources effectively, and this includes setting reasonable publication schedules to meet this public interest. While there is an obvious public interest in the release of the Mayor's diary, we believe this is met by our intention to publish this information on a regular basis. We do not believe the public interest favours the disruption that would be caused to GLA staff by expediting this publication when its early publication would not meet any immediate or exceptional public concerns at the present time.

We therefore find the balance of public interest falls in maintaining the exemption and the GLA publishing this information in accordance with our existing publication timetable.

The Mayor's key engagements are also published in the Mayor's report which forms part the meeting papers at each Mayor's Question Time:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/mayor-london/mayors-reports-assembly>

The Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC) publishes notes of meetings between the Mayor and the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service which can be found at <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/governance-and-decision-making/mayor-commissioner-meeting>

The Scottish Violence Reduction Unit is part of the Partnership Reference Group (PRG) the Violence Reduction Unit. The MOPAC page about the London Violence Reduction Unit (which is Chaired by the Mayor) lists the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit as a partner <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/violence-reduction-unit-vru/who-violence-reduction-unit>. Agendas and minutes are published.

You refer to direct reports in question 3. The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime Sophie Linden may have had other meetings of this nature. MOPAC are listed as a separate authority under Schedule 1 of the FOI Act. You may therefore wish to submit a separate request to foi@mopac.london.gov.uk.

If you have any further questions relating to this matter, please contact me, quoting the reference MGLA260219-6515.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Phillips
Information Governance Officer

If you are unhappy with the way the GLA has handled your request, you may complain using the GLA's FOI complaints and internal review procedure, available at: <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/governance-and-spending/sharing-our-information/freedom-information>