



**Our Ref:** 000205/24  
**Address Correspondence to:** Information Management  
**Date:** 06 February 2024

## Freedom of Information Act 2000

I write in connection with your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), received on 12/01/2024 in which you requested the following information:

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*1. How many crimes on the metaverse have been reported to your force since 2021? By Metaverse, I mean a virtual-reality space in which users can interact within a computer-generated environment such as Meta's game Horizon Worlds. If possible please can you detail the nature of the offence alleged, time of the reporting and decision in the case whether to investigate or not.*

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Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Leicestershire Police, when refusing to provide such information (because the information is exempt) to provide you the applicant with a notice which: (a) states that fact, (b) specifies the exemption in question and (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

The exemption(s) applicable to the information are as follows.

### **Section 12(2) – Cost of compliance exceeds appropriate limit.**

Section 12 of the act does not oblige a public authority to comply with a request for information should the authority estimate that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit. Subsection 2 removed the obligation to confirm or deny whether it holds the information in circumstances where ascertaining that fact would alone exceed the appropriate limit.

In this circumstance, there is no specific identifier in our crime recording system to tag whether a crime itself took place on the Metaverse. In order to provide an accurate response, we would need to review the logs of every crime to determine their relevance to your request.

In order to retrieve the information you have requested would therefore be in excess of the 18 hours specified by the Home Office as the time period for which a police force should allocate to a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

In the Freedom of Information (Fees and Appropriate Limit) Regulations 2004, the current regulatory limit which has been set by the Secretary of State for public authorities, which includes the police service, is £450 for the marginal costs which are the costs of finding, sorting, editing or redacting information and disbursements (printing, photocopying etc). The Association of Chief Police Officers have agreed a national standard of an hourly rate of £25 is to be charged for the time taken. In essence therefore, the costs equate to 18 hours work per request. It will be

apparent therefore that within the time frame of 18 hours it will not be possible to extract the information to answer any of your questions.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter acts as a Refusal Notice under s12(1) as the cost of providing you with the information is above the amount to which we are legally required to respond i.e. the cost of locating and retrieving the information exceeds the "appropriate level" as stated in the Freedom of Information (Fees and Appropriate Limit) Regulations 2004.

### **Section 16 – Duty to Provide Advice and Assistance**

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Our data analysts could perform a key word search for '**metaverse**' to see how many results were received that way, however this data would be reflective of the exact search term only. For example, if there were mentions of the 'meta-verse', this would **not** be included. Similarly, if specific platforms were detailed instead of the generic terminology of 'metaverse', these would also be excluded from the results.

If you would like to resubmit your request with this in mind, please provide us with a list of search terms you'd like our data analysts to search under.

Leicestershire Police provides you the right to ask for a re-examination of your request under its review procedure. Letters should be addressed to the Information Manager, Corporate Services Department at the above address. If you decide to request such a review and having followed the Force's full process you are still dissatisfied, then you have the right to direct your comments to the Information Commissioner who will give it consideration.

Yours sincerely,

### **Freedom of Information Officer**

Leicestershire Police

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