Gloucestershire Constabulary
Police Headquarters
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www.gloucestershire.police.uk

Our reference: FOI_26_1026
E-mail: FOI @gloucestershire.police.uk
Direct dial: 01452 754304
Postal Address: As above
Date: 09/11/2026

Dear

Gloucestershire Constabulary Freedom of Information request FOI_26_1026

On 26/10/2026 you sent an email constituting a request under the Freedom of Information Act asking the following:

I am writing to make a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 regarding Gloucestershire Constabulary's recently established Retail Theft Unit/team.
I currently work within retail security as a Store Detective in Gloucestershire. During a recent incident at one of the stores I work at, I spoke with an attending Gloucestershire Constabulary officer who informed me that the Constabulary has established a dedicated Retail Theft Unit.

I am particularly interested in understanding the purpose and operation of the unit, its geographical coverage and resources, and how it will work alongside retailers, store detectives, security officers and store management in tackling retail theft.
I would therefore be grateful if you could provide the following information:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I would like to request information regarding Gloucestershire Constabulary's Retail Theft Unit, Retail Crime Unit, or any newly established dedicated team whose primary responsibility is retail theft/shoplifting and retail crime.

I understand from a Gloucestershire Constabulary police officer that a dedicated Retail Theft Unit/team has been established. Please provide the following information:

1. ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSE
• The official name of the unit/team.
• The date on which the unit was formally established and the date on which it became operational.
• The reason for establishing the unit and its principal objectives.
• Whether the unit is permanent, a pilot/trial, or funded for a fixed period.
• Any internal or publicly releasable documents setting out the unit's purpose, terms of reference, objectives, operating model or strategy.

We are committed to being an anti-discriminatory organisation. This means not only acting in a non-discriminatory way, but addressing systemic inequalities, disadvantage and discrimination.

• Whether the unit forms part of a wider operation or strategy concerning retail crime, including Operation Express, and if so, how the unit fits within that operation/strategy.

2. STAFFING AND STRUCTURE

• The total number of personnel assigned to the unit, broken down by rank/role where possible, for example Police Constables, Sergeants, Inspectors, PCSOs, police staff or analysts.
• Whether personnel are permanently assigned to the unit or undertake retail crime duties alongside other responsibilities.
• Whether there are plans to increase or decrease the number of personnel within the unit.
• Which department, command or Local Policing Area the unit sits within and the rank of the officer responsible for the unit.

3. GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

• Whether the unit operates across the whole Gloucestershire Constabulary force area or only within specified locations.
• If its coverage is limited, please provide the towns, districts or Local Policing Areas covered.
• Whether officers from the unit can investigate offenders who commit retail theft across multiple areas of Gloucestershire.
• Whether the unit works with neighbouring police forces where organised or prolific retail offenders operate across force boundaries.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES AND INVESTIGATIONS

• The types of retail crime the unit is responsible for investigating.
• Whether the unit investigates individual shoplifting incidents or primarily focuses on prolific, repeat or organised retail offenders.
• The criteria used to determine whether a retail theft investigation is referred or allocated to the unit.
• Whether the unit conducts proactive operations targeting known or suspected retail offenders.
• Whether its responsibilities include identifying unknown suspects from CCTV and other evidence.
• Whether the unit links separate shoplifting offences involving the same offender across different stores, retailers or locations.
• Whether the unit investigates organised retail crime involving groups travelling between multiple stores or areas.
• Whether the unit is responsible for seeking Criminal Behaviour Orders or other preventative measures against prolific retail offenders.
• Whether the unit conducts arrests itself or provides intelligence/investigative support to neighbourhood and response officers.

5. WORKING WITH RETAILERS, STORE DETECTIVES AND SECURITY

• Whether officers within the Retail Theft Unit will liaise directly with retailers, store managers, loss-prevention teams, store detectives and security officers.
• Whether retailers, store detectives or security personnel will have a direct method of contacting or communicating with the Retail Theft Unit regarding retail crime, prolific offenders, intelligence or ongoing investigations.
• Whether retail theft incidents can be reported or referred directly to the Retail Theft Unit by retailers, store detectives or security personnel, or whether all incidents must continue to be reported through Gloucestershire Constabulary’s standard reporting methods.

• If incidents cannot be reported directly to the unit, please confirm the reporting process that retailers and security personnel should use and how reported incidents are subsequently identified for referral or allocation to the Retail Theft Unit.
• Whether the standard 999, 101 and online crime-reporting routes will remain the appropriate methods for reporting retail theft, including the circumstances in which each route should be used.
• Whether there are any plans to introduce a dedicated telephone number, email address, online portal or other reporting/referral route specifically for retailers, store detectives, loss-prevention staff or security personnel to contact the Retail Theft Unit.
• Where an incident has already been reported through 101, online reporting or another standard reporting route, whether a store detective/security officer can subsequently contact the Retail Theft Unit directly to provide additional intelligence or evidence.
• Whether the unit intends to hold regular meetings or intelligence-sharing arrangements with retailers, Business Improvement Districts, retail crime partnerships, store detectives or private security providers.
• Whether store detectives/security officers are able to provide intelligence directly to the unit regarding prolific, repeat or organised retail offenders, even where that intelligence does not relate solely to one individual reported incident, and if so, through what mechanism.
• Whether the unit will proactively contact retailers, store detectives or security personnel to obtain CCTV, witness statements, body-worn video or other evidence.
• Whether any guidance, procedures or information have been or will be produced for retailers, store detectives and security personnel explaining how they should engage with the unit.

6. REPORTING, EVIDENCE AND CASE MANAGEMENT

• Whether the creation of the Retail Theft Unit changes how retailers should report shoplifting and other retail crime.
• How a retail theft report made through the normal reporting system is identified as suitable for involvement by the Retail Theft Unit.
• Whether there are specific criteria, such as value of goods stolen, frequency of offending, violence/threats, number of linked offences or evidence of organised offending, which result in a case being referred to the unit.
• Whether there are specific evidential requirements for CCTV, witness statements, body-worn video or suspect identification when submitting retail theft reports.
• Whether the unit has arrangements for retailers to provide CCTV or other digital evidence electronically.
• Whether multiple crime reference numbers involving the same suspected offender can be brought together and investigated collectively by the unit.
• Whether retailers or store detectives can alert the unit that a newly reported incident appears to involve an offender already responsible for other reported retail thefts.

7. BUDGET AND FUNDING

• The budget allocated to establishing and operating the unit.
• The anticipated annual operating cost of the unit.
• The source(s) of funding for the unit, including whether funding comes from Gloucestershire Constabulary’s existing budget, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Home Office funding, specific grants or other sources.
• Whether any additional funding has been allocated specifically for tackling retail theft/shoplifting during the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years.

8. PERFORMANCE AND OBJECTIVES

• Any targets, KPIs or performance measures established for the unit.

• Whether these include targets relating to charge rates, solved rates, arrests, repeat offenders, crime reduction, value of goods recovered, Criminal Behaviour Orders or retailer satisfaction.
• How the effectiveness of the unit will be evaluated.
• If the unit has already become operational, the number of investigations, arrests, charges, summonses and other positive outcomes attributed to the unit to date, if this information is recorded and readily available.

9. PARTNERSHIP AND INTELLIGENCE WORK
• Which external organisations the unit currently works with or intends to work with in tackling retail crime.
• Whether the unit works with Business Improvement Districts, retail crime partnerships, national retailers, private security companies or intelligence-sharing platforms.
• Whether information concerning prolific retail offenders is routinely shared between the unit, neighbourhood policing teams and retailers/security personnel where lawful and appropriate.
• Whether the unit has arrangements for identifying and targeting offenders responsible for offences against multiple different retailers.
• Whether intelligence supplied by store detectives or security officers regarding patterns of offending, suspected organised groups or prolific individuals can be submitted to the unit independently of individual crime reports.

10. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT
• Whether Gloucestershire Constabulary intends to expand the Retail Theft Unit or its retail crime capability.
• Any publicly releasable plans, strategies, business cases, briefing documents or evaluation documents relating to the future development of the unit.

Where a requested figure changes over time, please provide the position as at the date this request is processed.

Where any of the requested information is already contained within existing documents, policies, operational guidance, terms of reference, business cases, briefing documents or similar recorded material, I would be happy to receive copies of those documents where appropriate rather than requiring the information to be reproduced specifically for this request.

I appreciate that this is a detailed request. If any part of the request would exceed the appropriate cost limit under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I would be grateful if you could provide the information that can reasonably be supplied within the limit and, in accordance with the duty to provide advice and assistance under section 16, advise me how the remaining elements could be refined or separated into a subsequent request.

If any information is withheld under an exemption, please identify the exemption relied upon and, where applicable, explain the public-interest considerations supporting its application. Where only part of a document or piece of information is exempt, I would be grateful if the remainder could be disclosed with the exempt material redacted.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 s1, I can confirm that Gloucestershire Constabulary holds some relevant information.

Following receipt of your request, a search was conducted by a Constabulary subject matter expert (SME) for the relevant and recorded information required to answer your questions. I also undertook a search of the internet for publicly available information which has been previously released by Gloucestershire Constabulary.

Question	Response / Exemption
1	A team has been set up and is operational, temporarily ring fenced to tackle retail crime. This is a pilot project with the intention of building trust and confidence between Gloucestershire Constabulary & businesses, preventing and detecting retail crime. It utilises Operation Express as part of its processes when responding to retail crime. For those bulleted parts of Q1 not answered in full here, Section 31(1)(a) applies – please see below.
2	Section 31(1)(a) – please see below
3	Section 31(1)(a) – please see below
4	The unit is taking a mixture of cases supported by the neighbourhood policing teams. It can support in seeking CBOs, is able to conduct arrests and can operate independently from other teams. For those bulleted parts of Q4 not answered in full here, Section 31(1)(a) applies – please see below.
5	The team carries out investigations in the usual manner following up on reasonable lines of enquiry. The normal routes for reporting incidents, concerns or intelligence are encouraged. For those bulleted parts of Q5 not answered in full here, Section 31(1)(a) applies – please see below.
6	Section 31(1)(a) – please see below
7	No additional funding has been allocated. This is a response policing function. For those bulleted parts of Q7 not answered in full here, Section 31(1)(a) applies – please see below.
8	The team is operational and amongst its targets is to build trust and confidence between Gloucestershire Constabulary & businesses. A solved rate KPI has been set initially at 33.3% For those bulleted parts of Q8 not answered in full here, Section 31(1)(a) applies – please see below.

9	The unit works with business improvement districts (BID), individual businesses, Gloucestershire Safe & local neighbourhood policing teams. For those bulleted parts of Q9 not answered in full here, Section 31(1)(a) applies – please see below.
10	No information held.

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

The following the following exemption applies:

Section 31(1)(a) – Law Enforcement

The above exemption is qualified and prejudice based, therefore both Public Interest and Harm tests are required.

Evidence of Harm

The prevention and detection of crime is the foundation upon which policing is built. Gloucestershire Constabulary has a clear responsibility to prevent and detect crime, in this case, retail theft.

Whilst the Constabulary acknowledges that a team has been established, disclosing further information about the team's volume of staff and their capabilities, any tactics they use, the means of investigation they utilise & information about case management and intelligence could result in those people intent on committing crime using the information for negative purposes.

Factors in Favour of Disclosure

The disclosure of this information would lead to a better awareness of the policing tactics in the County and provide information and reassurance to the public that adequate measures are in place for Gloucestershire Constabulary to detect and tackle retail theft.

Factors against Disclosure

The disclosure of information would compromise law enforcement as individuals who are intent on committing crime could use this information to disrupt the service Gloucestershire Constabulary provides to the community. This would enable more crime to be committed and have an impact on police resources, thereby hindering the prevention and detection of crime.

Balance Test

Disclosure would provide a greater openness and transparency to the community that adequate measures are taken by Gloucestershire Constabulary to deliver the best possible service to the people it is charged to protect. However, Gloucestershire Constabulary will never disclose information that will potentially cause harm to the public

or the Officers that serve under it. Therefore, it is our opinion that the balance of the public interest favours withholding the information.

In accordance with the Act, this section of my letter represents a Refusal Notice for your request.

If you are not satisfied with this response or any actions taken in dealing with your request, you have the right to ask that we review your case under our internal procedure. Please note that a request for an internal review must be made within 20 working days of the response to your original request.

If you decide to request that such a review is undertaken and following this process you are still unsatisfied, you then have the right to direct your complaint to the Information Commissioner for consideration.

The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following means:

Website - https://ico.org.uk/

Call their helpline - 0303 123 1113

Email - casework@ico.org.uk

Post – Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

Disclosure Officer
Gloucestershire Constabulary