

Freedom of Information – Response - 27580

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, please provide the following recorded information relating to the fire at HMP Highpoint, Suffolk, on 24/04/2026 at 14:40 BST.

- *The full investigation report into the cause and origin of the fire, including any fire investigation report produced by or for His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), the prison operator, or Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service.*
- *Any internal incident reports, post-incident reviews or "lessons learned" reports produced in relation to this fire.*
- *Any correspondence (emails or letters) between the prison, HMPPS, Ministry of Justice, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service and any other relevant public bodies discussing the cause of the fire and conclusions reached.*

If the full investigation is ongoing and not yet complete, please provide any interim reports or completed sections that set out the current understanding of the cause and origin of the fire.

Suffolk County Council (SCC) can confirm that we hold information that falls within the scope of your request including investigation reports, interim reports, internal incident reports, post-incident reviews, lessons learned report and related correspondence however, it is being withheld under the following exemptions:

- Section 31 Law Enforcement;
- Section 38 Health and Safety; and
- Section 40 Personal Data.

Section 31 – Law Enforcement

s.31 enables a public authority to refuse a request where disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice law enforcement activities including;

- the prevention or detection of crime;
- the apprehension or prosecution of offenders;
- the administration of justice;
- the maintenance of security and good order in prisons; and
- the exercise of public authority functions carried out for the purpose of determining whether any person has failed to comply with the law, whether any person is responsible for improper conduct, and for ascertaining the cause of an accident.

You have requested information that concerns a fire occurring within a prison and includes material generated as part of investigations into the cause and origin of a fire incident. Disclosing this information would be likely to reveal investigative methodologies, security arrangements, operational vulnerabilities, incident response procedures, findings under consideration and the manner in which Suffolk Fire and Rescue Services (SFRS) alongside other authorities, investigate serious incidents within prisons.

Releasing highly sensitive information relating to incident investigation would be likely to prejudice the maintenance of security and good order in prisons.

As s.31 is a qualified exemption it also requires that we carry out the public interest test:

Factors in favour of disclosure:

- Promotes openness and transparency;
- Increase public understanding of the circumstances surrounding the fire; and
- Enables public scrutiny.

Factors in favour of withholding:

- Protects the integrity of the investigative processes and any future or ongoing investigations;
- Avoids causing harm to any current or future criminal, disciplinary, regulatory or enforcement activity.
- Prevents disclosure of information that could undermine prison security and good order.
- Releasing this information would reveal vulnerabilities, operational tactics, security arrangements and investigative techniques used.
- We need to ensure that SFRS and other authorities are able to effectively determine the cause of incidents where any person has failed to comply with the law or engaged in improper conduct.

Having considered these factors SCC believe that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Section 38 – Health and Safety

s.38 enables a public authority to refuse a request where disclosing the requested information would or would be likely to endanger the physical or mental health of any individual or endanger the safety of any individual.

The information you have requested contains details relating to a prison environments, incident response arrangements, operational practices and individuals involved in responding to or affected by the incident. Disclosing this information would likely create risks to the safety of prisoners, staff, emergency responders and visitors by revealing information that could be exploited to undermine safety and security arrangements.

Due to this SCC feel that this exemption is engaged however, s.38 does require a public interest test before the exemption can be fully applied.

Factors in favour of disclosure:

- Promotes transparency regarding management of serious incidents.
- Assists public understanding of the response to the fire.

Factors in favour of withholding:

- We need to protect the safety and wellbeing of staff, prisoners and others.
- Releasing the information into the public domain would enable it to be used by individuals with malicious intent and increase risks to individuals.
- Releasing the information would negatively impact SFRS and other services ability to maintain safety and emergency response arrangements.

Having considered these factors SCC believe that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Section 40 – Personal Data

The requested reports and correspondence contain personal data relating to staff, prisoners, witnesses, investigators, emergency responders and other identifiable individuals.

The ICO's guidance states that third-party personal information is exempt from disclosure where disclosure would contravene the data protection principles.

Disclosure under FOIA is disclosure to the world at large. We consider that disclosure of such personal data would be unfair and would be likely to contravene the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018. Accordingly, section 40(2) applies.

Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and is not subject to the public interest test.

Based on the above exemptions we are withholding the requested information.