

EXCLUSIVEBy **KATE
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**WATCHED OVER:**
Harry and Meghan
with security detail in
2018, before they lost
the right to taxpayer-
funded protection

PRINCE HARRY tried to keep details of his legal battle to reinstate his police protection secret from the public, The Mail on Sunday can reveal.

High Court documents show he sought a far-reaching confidentiality order on documents and witness statements surrounding his case against the Government.

But the Home Office argued for transparency, saying 'there must be a sufficiently good reason, in the wider public interest, to justify the departure from open justice that such an order involves'.

Both sides then agreed that some papers would be made public with the Home Office agreeing to carry out a 'confidentiality exercise' to determine what would be kept secret, even though it caused 'an unprecedented expenditure of time and resources'.

When The Mail on Sunday last month revealed that Harry was suing the Government, his spin-doctors swung into action, briefing journalists that Harry was being denied the right to pay for bodyguards. It led to inaccurate reports across the media, such as the BBC headline: 'Prince Harry in legal fight to pay for UK police protection.'

As documents lodged at the High Court last week show, no such offer to pay was made in the Prince's initial 'pre-action' letters to the Home Office, suggesting he expected British taxpayers to cover it.

The revelations are a crushing rebuttal to Harry's initial public statement that implied he had always been willing to foot the bill.

Nor did he offer to pay when he visited the UK last June to unveil a statue to his mother, Princess Diana. Home Office lawyers state that it was only in later correspondence that the offer was made.

That led to fury last night that aides acting for Harry sought to confuse the mainstream media's response to the story, ironic given the Prince now has a role with a Silicon Valley firm tackling 'misinformation' online.

As royal author David McClure, tweeted: 'Once more confusion about the accuracy of messages coming out of the Sussex camp. First Harry offers to pay, then when he visits the UK, he does not.'

The Duke launched his claim in September, more than 18 months after the Government's RAVEC (Royal and VIP Executive Committee) decided he would be stripped of his full state-funded security.

But court papers reveal that Harry still maintains 'exceptional status', which means he could be afforded protection depending on the nature of his visits, assessed on a 'case-by-case basis'.

Harry argues that 'while his role within the institution has changed, his profile as a member of the Royal Family has not. Nor has the threat to him and his family.'

Yet his initial bid to get the deci-

...then minutes after MoS broke story his PR machine tried to put positive spin on the dispute

sion overturned did not mention he would pay anything. Court papers say: 'The offer [to pay] is now advanced in the Claimant's witness statement... but notably was

'Unprecedented expense of time and resources'

not advanced to RAVEC in June 2021 or in any of the pre-action correspondence which followed.'

It adds that Harry's recent offer to pay is nevertheless 'irrelevant' because 'personal protective security by the police is not available on

a privately financed basis, and RAVEC does not make decisions... on the basis that any financial contribution could be sought or obtained to pay for it'.

When The Mail on Sunday first broke the story, lawyers and PR advisers acting for the Sussexes sought to put their own gloss on it.

Just six minutes after The Mail on Sunday's world exclusive, the Press Association, apparently having been given an advanced briefing by Harry's camp, reported that the Duke had offered 'to pay personally for UK police protection' and quoted his lawyer saying: 'He remains willing to cover the cost of security.'

Omid Scobie, a journalist known

to be supportive of the Sussexes, also appeared to have been briefed by Harry's team. Five hours after this newspaper told the Prince's aides we were planning a story, Scobie told his 76,000 Twitter followers: 'Prince Harry has applied for a judicial review of a Home Office decision not to allow him to personally pay for police protection for himself and his family when they are in the UK, a legal representative for the Sussexes confirms.'

Harry's team only responded to this newspaper after this inaccurate version of events had been tweeted. Further questions were raised last night about the legal fight.

Former Minister Norman Baker said: 'The police are not a commod-

REVEALED: How Harry tried to keep his legal fight over bodyguards secret

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

Harry sues Britain over loss of his bodyguards

SEE PAGES 6-7

SCOOP: How The Mail on Sunday exclusively revealed royal bombshell

ity to buy like a pack of biscuits. If Harry has concerns about a specific threat, he should share those with the police. Otherwise, it is up to him to engage security staff on any visits. Personally, I would have thought he was at more risk in gun-mad America than over here.'

Home Office QC Robert Palmer has said that if Harry loses, the Government will 'seek the costs incurred in full, including those of the confidentiality exercise'.