

Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey – Decision Making Record

Report Title: Request from the Chief Constable to the Police & Crime Commissioner for the provision of funding from the General Reserve to pay for the costs of Operation Heather

Decision number: 063/2014

Author and Job Role: Ian Perkin Treasurer and Chief Finance Officer

Protective Marking: Not Protectively Marked

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this request is to provide funding for Operation Heather, which will establish a dedicated enquiry team and pay for the legal costs associated with activity that will arise from, family requests for disclosure of information, High Court Hearings and possibly new inquests associated with the deaths of four army personnel at the Princess Royal Barracks, Deepcut, Surrey between 1995 and 2002

Background

The Attorney General has agreed for a High Court hearing to consider whether there should be a new inquest into the deaths of one of the four personnel who died at the Princess Royal Barracks between 1995 and 2002. The families of the other three personnel who died have now asked for the disclosure of information held by Surrey Police that relates to those deaths.

The Surrey Police response to these new developments under Operation Heather is to review and then disclose all relevant material. The scale of this enquiry is significant, as Surrey Police involvement in the deaths at the Princess Royal Barracks stretches back over almost twenty years with a considerable volume of documentation needing careful review, notwithstanding that none of the senior officers who worked on the case are still serving with Surrey Police.

It has been decided, so that the families can have confidence that their requests for information will be properly dealt with, that a small dedicated team under the leadership of an Assistant Chief Constable will be established to handle this matter. The estimated costs of this team will amount to £270,000 per year, rising to £457,000 if new inquests are ordered. The team is expected to remain in place for a period of at least two years and in addition to the staffing costs that will be incurred, if new inquests are ordered, then it is likely that legal costs of between £170,000 and £450,000 will also be need to be provided for by Surrey Police over the same period. As the workload arising from Operation Heather could not have been reasonably foreseen it was not included in the Surrey Police revenue budget for the current financial year (2014/15) and could therefore not be managed from within existing staffing resources. The request to provide funding from the PCC's General Reserve

is consequently being made, in order to provide the necessary resources to cope with this exceptional event.

Recommendation

That an amount up to the sum of £1.3 million to be allocated from the Police & Crime Commissioner's General Reserve to provide for the costs of Operation Heather, as outlined above. The Chief Constable to keep detailed records of all expenditure incurred in this operation and any sums not expended in the execution of Operation Heather are to be returned to the General Reserve in due course.

Police and Crime Commissioner Approval

I approve the Chief Constable's request that funding can be drawn down from the PCC's General Reserve to fund the costs associated with Operation Heather up to a maximum of £1.3 million.

Signature: 

Date: 29/05/2014

All decisions must be added to the decision register.

Areas of consideration

Consultation

The PCC has taken advice from his Chief Finance Officer

Financial implications

The costs of Operation Heather could not reasonably have been foreseen and therefore provision was not made in the 2014/15 Surrey Police Revenue Budget

Legal

Appropriate legal advice will be taken by the Chief Constable as appropriate.

Risks

As highlighted in the report.

Equality and diversity

No implications

Risks to human rights

Funding Operation Heather ensures that any risks to human rights are minimised.