

PFCC Decision Report

Please ensure all sections below are completed

Report reference number: 096-2020
Classification (e.g. Not protectively marked/restricted):
Title of report: Correspondence Capacity
Area of county / stakeholders affected: Countywide
Report by: Darren Horsman Date of report: 30/07/2020 Enquiries to: Darren.Horsman@essex.police.uk

1. Purpose of the report

To note the increase in correspondence over the last nine months and consider the best way to manage this.

2. Recommendations

To recruit an additional 0.4 FTE on a nine-month contract to provide additional capacity to manage the increased level of correspondence. The appointment is Scale 5, SCP 22.

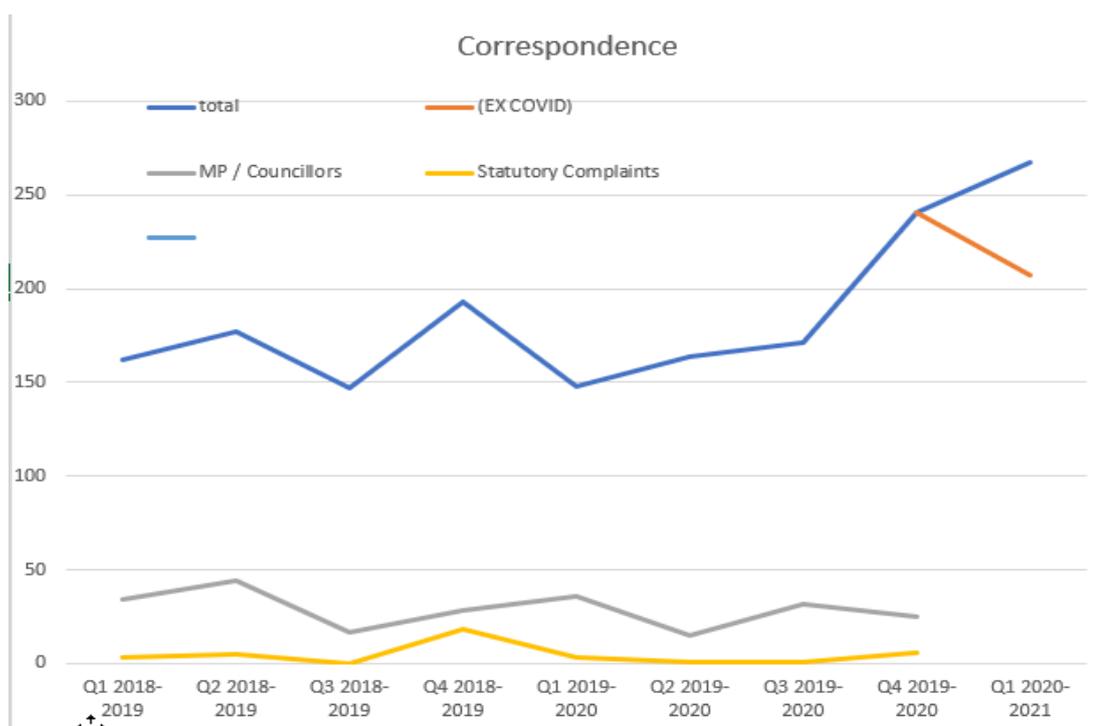
3. Benefits of the proposal

The increase in correspondence has become unmanageable within the existing allocated resource and additional resources need to be allocated to this area if we want to continue to meet our current correspondence standards. This proposal provides a pragmatic way of managing anticipated demand in the medium term while we consider the longer-term resource requirement.

4. Background and proposal

During the 1st quarter of 2020-2021 the PFCC's office received 267 piece of correspondence including complaints (not Reviews), FOIs, MP and Councillor Correspondence and general correspondence. This was an 80% increase on the amount of correspondence received during the same period the year before. During this period 60 pieces of correspondence were received relating specifically to COVID-19. If we exclude this COVID-19 related correspondence 207 pieces were received, a 40% increase from the same period the previous year.

In quarter 4 of 2019-2020, 241 pieces were received which is 25% higher than the previous year and in quarter 3 171 pieces were received an increase of 16%.

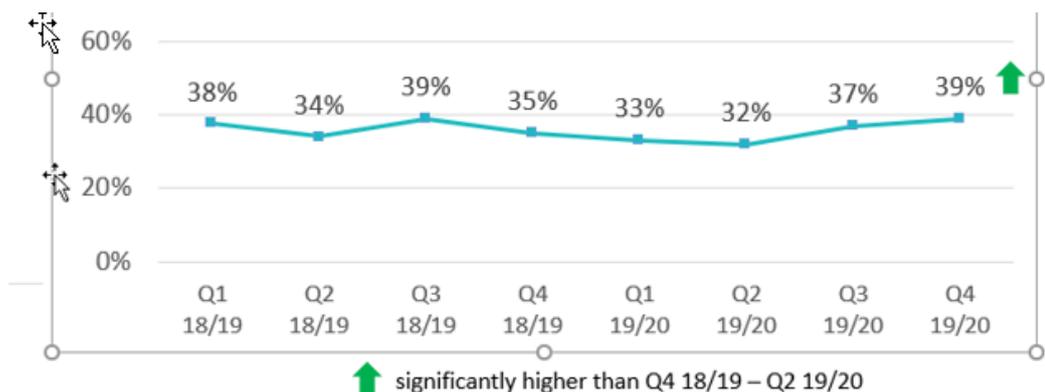


I have looked at various elements of the correspondence to see if certain types of correspondence are causing the increase. However, looking at the reporting from the Q1 2018-2019 to now there is no specific type of correspondence that seems to be causing the increase. As shown above correspondence from MPs and Councillors have stayed relatively stable as have the number of complaints we receive.

Over the period we have shortened our response times, improved our reporting and our systems so that we provide better quality and quicker responses to the public. Anecdotally this has resulted in a high level of satisfaction, more positive responses to our answers and more positive interactions. While this may result in the gentle increase in overall correspondence levels it doesn't seem to account for the significant increase in the last nine months.

One correlation that does fit the patterns above is the increased awareness of the role of the PFCC that is being shown in the Public Confidence Survey.

Prompted awareness of role of PFCC



This measure was put into the public perception survey to provide a longitudinal measure and allow us to track the impact that different events and activities had on awareness of the role.

This statistically significant increase in awareness in Q3 and Q4 in turn corresponds with the MakeADifference campaign the first communication activity designed to broaden awareness of the role of PFCC along with understanding. It also corresponds with the build up to the PFCC election planned for May 2020 but postponed because of COVID-19 and the increased political activities from candidates.

5. Alternative options considered and rejected

There are several alternative options that we could take to manage this demand. We could reduce the quality of the responses we provide and the quality of the information provided. This would be the cheapest option but would not support our strategic objectives.

We could move current resources within the Policy and Public Engagement Team, by reducing the resource focused on our engagement or our communication activity. This would have a direct impact on our levels of engagement or communication and undermine the attempt to build better awareness and support the Commissioner's commitment to public transparency and engagement.

If the decision is taken to increase the level of resource dedicated to managing our correspondence there are also several ways to source this, either from the increased hours of existing members of staff, a fixed term position or temporary agency staff.

6. Police and Crime Plan

Accessibility, public accountability and transparency are all key commitments within the Commissioner's ethics and integrity framework, Police and Crime Plan Extension and Fire and Rescue Plan. Ensuring we are able to manage and respond meaningfully to the public is a key aspect of how the Commissioner performs his role.

7. Police operational implications

There are no direct policing operational implications.

8. Financial implications

The full Scale 5 SCP 22 rate is £23,817. The 0.4FTE employee cost including national insurance contributions and pension is £10,109.23 per annum.

9. Legal implications

Several areas of correspondence managed by this functional area are statutory such as FOIs and SAR. Compliance with these is managed by this function so operating at an unsustainable level does increase the risk that the Commissioner will be unable to deliver against their statutory obligations.

10. Staffing implications

The staffing implications of this proposal are set out above.

11. Equality and Diversity implications

As with any post there is the requirement to recruit according to our equality and diversity objectives. Maintaining an effective correspondence function that is aware and able to offer alternative avenues of contact where necessary does support the Commissioner's Equality and Diversity objectives.

12. Risks

This paper presents several options to mitigate the risk of running this function at an unsustainable level. If decisions are made to manage the current decision this could result in significant impact on staff, reputation and published obligations.

13. Governance Boards

This paper was discussed at SMT on 28/7/2020

14. Background papers

N/A

Report Approval

The report will be signed off by the OPFCC Chief Executive and Treasurer prior to review and sign off by the PFCC / DPFCC.

Deputy M.O.

Sign: 

Print: Darren Horsman

Date: 8 March 2021

Chief Finance Officer / Treasurer

Sign: 

Print: Julia Berry.....

Date: 10 March 2021.....

Publication

Is the report for publication?

YES

NO

If 'NO', please give reasons for non-publication (Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State 'None' if applicable)

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If the report is not for publication, the Chief Executive will decide if and how the public can be informed of the decision.

Redaction

If the report is for publication, is redaction required:

1. Of Decision Sheet? YES
NO

2. Of Appendix? YES
NO

If 'YES', please provide details of required redaction:

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Date redaction carried out:

Treasurer / Chief Executive Sign Off – for Redactions only

If redaction is required, the Treasurer or Chief Executive is to sign off that redaction has been completed.

Sign:

Print:

Chief Executive/Treasurer

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:



Sign:

Print: Roger Hirst

PFCC

Date signed: 12 March 2021

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

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Sign:

Print:

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: