

PFCC Decision Report

Report reference number: 135/23

Classification: Not Protectively Marked

Title of report:
Proposal to claim financially for known and retrospective costs for the Wethersfield Centre (Operation Ivy)

Area of county / stakeholders affected: Local Policing Command, Braintree and Uttlesford District

Report by: Sgt Phillippa Pirie

Chief Officer: ACC Andy Mariner

Date of report: 31st July 2023

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1. Executive Summary

In March 2023 the government announced that several immigration centres will be opened in different parts of the country. One such proposed centre was at the site of an MOD base at Wethersfield, in the district of Braintree and Uttlesford.

On 12th July 2023, the site went live, and the first group of service users arrived on the site.

The site capacity is 1,700 and will provide accommodation for adult male service users from several countries across the world.

Two officers have been seconded as the dedicated officers for Wethersfield who will work from the site itself.

Several risks have been identified which have continued to feature through the planning phase of the asylum centre and through to go-live. These risks include:

1. Protests causing disruption to the site and residents
2. Protest group activity opposing the site
3. Damage, injury and fear caused by an attack on the site
4. Offences committed against service users by others
5. Reduction of trust in the police on the part of the existing Wethersfield community and / or more broadly on the part of UK policing, because of poor communication, engagement and follow up reporting
6. Increase in fear of crime because of the service users being in the area
7. ASB increasing in the area as a result of service users
8. Disorder and low-level crime at the airfield
9. Impact on business as usual due to an increased demand in relation to the site – this could include service users, threats or local residents' calls.
10. More resources may end up being required than anticipated. Incorrect tracking could result in an overspend.
11. Risks 1-9 may result in indirect costs without correct tracking, and inadvertently cause unfunded overspend.

2. Recommendations

Two recommendations are submitted to the PFCC:

1. Claim from the Home Office for the current known costs to Essex Police
2. Retrospective claim for additional costs, such as mutual aid for protests above our own capacity, overtime claims and costs of support – such as intelligence and the cost of command.

3. Background to the Proposal

The background to this decision request is as per the Executive Summary shown above. In addition to this, we have established that there are upfront costs, predicted costs, and retrospective costs. An overtime code has been established to monitor spending in relation to Operation Ivy. Finally, whilst the Home Office has advised this is a 12-month project, other predictions are suggesting longer.

4. Proposal and Associated Benefits

The estimated cost for 12 months (the initial assumption for funding from the Home Office), for 2 PCs, is **£145,948**. The following assumptions have been made:

- Both PCs are paid at the top of the pay scales
- 7% pay award applied from September 2023
- Both PCs are in the Pension Scheme
- Southeast allowance only – no further allowances / overtime applied

These officers have been taken from elsewhere in the business and are specifically dedicated to the policing of Wethersfield. As of 21st July, both officers are in post.

There is an expectation that these officers will be in post for 12 months and then posting reviewed annually afterwards – this will be in line with predictions as regards the longevity of the site. The requirement for two full time officers has been based on a site visit to Napier Barracks in Kent, which is much smaller in size than Wethersfield, and professional judgement.

Line management for the officers will be continued through the Community Policing Team line management. It is anticipated the supervisory costs will be minimal – and therefore will not be subject of the claim. This will be monitored, however, ongoing.

5. Options Analysis

The Commissioner could decide not to claim these costs and absorb them into normal operational activity; however, this is not recommended as it would not provide good value for money for Essex taxpayers.

6. Consultation and Engagement

Through the District Independent Advisory Group representatives of the community have been involved throughout the planning, implementation, and review of Operation Ivy, including discussions arounds the additional support required.

The Gold Lead has also participated in public meetings on the topic and various members of the force have been heavily involved in partnership working groups involving community groups, relevant government departments and local councils. The Essex Police Media team has been able to provide community insight through social media listening and the additional officers funded as part of this decision report have provided vital face to face community engagement which has been fed back into the gold group.

The Commissioner has also been represented by their Strategic Head of Policy and Public Engagement at the gold group. They have shared their input on the resources required to deliver this programme, manage community tensions and provide a visible presence. They have also shared views and opinions expressed by a variety of community members and elected representatives to the gold group to help provide a strong cohesive picture of local issues and concerns.

7. Strategic Links

The funding of these officers and the claim to the Home Office is intrinsically linked with delivery of the Police and Crime Plan and the Force Plan.

8. Police operational implications

Wethersfield is a small village within a rural area of the Braintree and Uttlesford District. These two funded officers will provide necessary additional policing support. They have been drawn from elsewhere. The Home Office is anticipating claims from policing with regard to the additional pressure on local infrastructure.

9. Financial implications

The estimated cost of providing two officers to police the Wethersfield Centre for 12 months will be **£145,948**.

There may also be additional costs and for this purpose Essex Police have established a budget code to be used by a limited number of senior authorising officers to track and govern spending.

Gold has requested 6 monthly updates of opportunity costing through completion of a return from each commander describing the time they have given to Op Ivy over the previous 6 months. This will be based on evidence from their diaries.

The intention is that we will retrospectively make further claims as additional costs occur.

10. Legal implications

There are no direct legal implications arising from this decision report.

11. Staffing implications

The two operational officers have been taken from two different teams in the District.

12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion implications

This decision will directly support the Commissioner and the force in complying with their equality and diversity responsibilities and helping promote understanding and cohesion among different communities. It is part of the partnership response to mitigate potential community tensions between different ethnic and national groups. This is a statutory responsibility for all public bodies under the Equality and Diversity Act 2010.

Significant work has been undertaken by the District Commander and others in the force to learn from similar centres elsewhere in the country and understand the role the force can have in supporting the wider partnership work being led by the Home Office. Through a variety of site visits and discussions the local district commander and the wider team have identified the need for a strong visible police presence, consistent engagement with local communities and the establishment of a clear link into the security services commissioned by the Home Office to manage the actual site. This is designed, in part, to mitigate any potential conflict between people staying in the centre and those living in the immediate community, and support any operational response required should tensions escalate.

As set out above in section 6, strong and consistent community engagement and consultation is being undertaken to understand current levels of tension and be able to act quickly to mitigate any risk. The need to mitigate community tension is a partnership responsibility and while this decision will support that, the force has also been very clear with partners on the need to establish a programme of activity and engagement with people at the site and local communities and encourage mutual

understanding and respect. This was a lesson learnt from other areas where this was provided by third sector partners.

Essex Police since May have been proactively assessing community tensions across the Force Area in relation to immigration and asylum matters weekly and this has executive level oversight and shared with partners and the Strategic Independent Advisory group. There is a regular Police Gold group chaired by the Police executive lead where any matters that need to be addressed strategically or tactically by Essex Police will be discussed. The police executive lead also represents Essex Police at a regular strategic partners meeting hosted by Braintree District Council. This forum also allows for wider sharing of any EDI issues or tensions.

13. Risks and Mitigations

Should this not be agreed, there will be a financial risk to the force.

RISK - There is a risk of additional costs not being funded and recognised properly, if there is no process in place to monitor or track these additional costs. To date, police overtime claimed relating to this project is £4,959 and short notice direct pay sits at £25,932 (these figures are based on an average salaried Police Constable).

MITIGATION – Essex Police have established a budget code and a limited number of senior authorising officers to track and govern spending. In relation to commanders' time. Gold has requested 6 monthly updates of opportunity costing through completion of a template a return from each commander describing the time they have given to Op Ivy over the previous 6 months. This is based on evidence from their diaries.

14. Governance Boards

This proposal, as well as risks described above, have been discussed and agreed within the Operation Ivy Strategic Gold Group chaired by ACC Mariner.

15. Links to Future Plans

N/A

16. Background Papers and Appendices

There are no background papers.

Report Approval

The report will be signed off by the PFCC's Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer prior to review and sign off by the PFCC / DPFCC.

Chief Executive / M.O.

Sign: *D Horsman*

Print: Darren Horsman - Deputy Monitoring Officer

Date: 13.9.2023

Chief Finance Officer

Sign:



Print: Janet Perry

Date: 12 September 2023

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	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Of Appendix?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>
	NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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

N/A

Date redaction carried out:

Chief Finance Officer / 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:

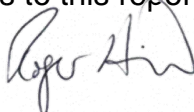
Print:

Chief Executive / Chief Finance Officer

Date signed:

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign: 

Print: Roger Hirst

PFCC

Date signed: 14/09/2023

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

.....
.....

Sign:

Print:

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: