

PFCC Decision Report

Report reference number: 107-24
Classification: Official
Title of report: Defending Democracy Funding for the General Election
Area of county / stakeholders affected: Essex-wide
Report by: Ch/Insp Paul Austin
Date of report: 14 th June 2024
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1.0 Executive Summary

This decision report (DR) seeks the PFCC's endorsement for the application for funding from the Home Office under the "Defending Democracy" Communities Fund to support policing during Operation Offglide. This is the national operation for the policing response to the General Election on 4th July. This funding has been made available by the Home Office as part of the funding pot for application by police forces.

2.0 Recommendations

That the PFCC endorses and approves the application to the Home Office for funding of £61,000 to provide heightened support to candidates, communities, and the force during the General Election period in 2024.

3.0 Background to the Proposal

In April 2024, the Home Office invited forces to apply for funding from the "Defending Democracy" Communities Fund for the upcoming local and at the time unknown general election. This is a fund of £10m made available by the Home Office for forces to bid for. The Home Office describes the fund as follows:

"The Local Community Fund (LCF) (£10m) is available to support local

police forces in delivering one-off specific policing activity, which aims to defend democracy or is in relation to the 2024 elections. This must be over and above usual policing activity with an additional threat risk profile. This funding is not to be used for BAU policing. While there is an overlap with Operation Bridger, the LCF cannot be used to provide uplift or to amplify the Op Bridger network.

Essex initially did not make a bid for the local / PFCC Elections, however had always planned to bid for resourcing whenever the General Election was called. On 22nd May 2024, when the Prime Minister announced a General Election, Essex Police made a bid into the fund for £80,000 of which £61,000 has been awarded. Due to the short timeframe and unexpected nature of the General Election, this was submitted on 31st May 2024 which was the deadline for bids.

4.0 Proposal and Associated Benefits

The Essex Police bid can be split into the following areas with the proposed benefits also listed:

Additional visibility at polling stations and counts (above what is normally provided by Essex Police) Essex is seen as a bellwether county for the General Election. Over the last month, we have seen several high-profile visits by both the incumbent Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. It is prudent to suggest that this will continue to be a key battleground over the election period. Although Essex Police will continue to respond to these demands as BAU, these do place additional stress and pressure on policing over the summer period. During the summer months, Essex Police already has commitments towards preventing summer violence, the policing of Euro 2024, and surge patrols in areas of seasonality demand such as in our coastal towns. We would therefore like to enhance our response and mitigation to safeguard the election period by having additional resourcing. This will include officers to support high profile visits during the campaign period. As stated earlier, we can expect several key individuals to visit Essex. These officers will focus on prevention and reassurance during these visits, providing visible community policing.

[REDACTED]

Additional resourcing to triage allegations of electoral malpractice with a view to reducing the investigation time limit. This will also involve enhanced briefings of Monitoring Officers.

The risk being mitigated around electoral malpractice and the benefit is that there will be expedited triage of offences and allegations which will lead to increased

confidence in democracy locally. Additionally, there will be prevention work undertaken with Monitoring Officers to increase confidence in this area, with the aim of preventing inappropriate referrals to policing. This will consist of further enhanced briefings to Monitoring Officers by dedicated electoral malpractice staff. This goes beyond what the force currently offers in this area.

Additional investigative capacity to triage and investigate crimes where candidates are victims, specifically focusing on hate crime offences and public order. This will be primarily in the Local Policing Areas. Elections are important and emotive times in our community and therefore it is important that Essex Police has the additional capability to respond expeditiously to allegations that involve candidates. This additional funding will give us the ability to triage investigations quicker and cut down the amount of time taken to investigate these offences leading to enhanced confidence from candidates and from the wider public of Essex.

5.0 Options Analysis

Option 1.

The preferred option is that the Commissioner endorses the recommendation contained within the report which would enable Essex Police to carry out the stated activities to provide reassurance and additional visibility in our communities during the election period.

Option 2.

The Commissioner could choose not to support the recommendation and refuse the funding however Essex Police would still have to offer protection to candidates and a policing plan during the General Election. However, this would have to be delivered solely from BAU and will be hampered by additional demands on the county over a busy summer period.

6.0 Consultation and Engagement

The proposal has been discussed and received support within the Operation Offglide Gold Group chaired by ACC Nolan. It has also been discussed with the Police Federation which was represented in the Gold Group for discussions regarding overtime implications.

7.0 Strategic Links

The funding supports Essex Police in delivering the Defending Democracy Policing Protocol as identified by the Home Office.

It also supports the PFCC's Police and Crime Plan, specifically the priority around Further Investment in Crime Prevention.

8.0 Police operational implications

The additional operational activity will be completed utilising the funds as overtime, therefore it will not impact on normal policing activities.

9.0 Financial implications

The funding agreement is for £61,000 to be delivered from the Home Office. Due to the funding coming via the Home Office, there are no additional financial implications on Essex Police.

10.0 Legal implications

There are no legal implications identified.

11.0 Staffing implications

Due to the operational activity being completed with the use of overtime, there are no staffing implications for policing within this proposal and no staffing implications for the PFCC in making this decision.

12.0 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion implications

There are no DEI implications for this bid.

13.0 Risks and Mitigations

The risks of not accepting the funding are outlined in section 5. The Home Office has released the Defending Democracy Policing Protocol which sets out the policing responsibilities relating to the election process, meaning Essex Police is obliged to support the policing of the election process regardless of whether it accepts the funding. The funding supports the force in providing this policing response without impacting BAU and therefore prevents damage to the reputation of Essex Police.

There are no perceived risks in using the funding as detailed in section 4.

14.0 Governance Boards

Operation Offglide Gold Group with ACC Rachel Nolan as Gold Commander.

Approved at COG on 12th June 2024.

15.0 Links to Future Plans

This will build on the principles we have adopted within the Defending Democracy Policing Protocol. There will be no further decisions relating to this Decision Report for the PFCC however the Home Office has released further funding which Essex Police is in the process of bidding for and a further DR will be submitted in due course.

16.1 Background Papers and Appendices

Appendix 1 – Completed bid submitted to the Home Office.

Appendix 2 – Confirmation of funding approval from Home Office.

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:

Print: P. Brent-Isherwood

Date: 19 June 2024

Chief Financial Officer

Sign:



Print Janet Perry

Date: 25 June 2024

Publication

Is the report for publication? Yes

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

None

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

2. Of Appendix? YES

NO

NO

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

The second paragraph in section 4 should be redacted prior to publication. **CONFIRMED WITH AUTHOR**

Date redaction carried out: 28/06/2024

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: 

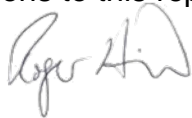
Print: Darren Horsman - Deputy MO

Chief Executive / Chief Finance Officer

Date signed: 18/9/2024

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign: 

Print: Roger Hirst

PFCC

Date signed: 25/06/2024

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

.....
.....
.....

Sign:

Print:

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed:

