
Decision ID:

PCCDJ	000667	2022
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1 Decision title

Firearms Licencing request for support from Covid Recovery Reserve

Executive summary

The responsibility for granting, renewing and rescinding firearms licences for residents within the two counties rests with the Firearms Licencing department of Hampshire Constabulary. This team assesses the suitability of applicants and manages ongoing licence holders with their work partially funded by the nationally set rates for obtaining or renewing licences. A key aspect of their work is effective risk management and ensuring the safe storage, handling and transfer of weapons is effectively recorded. Their work enables a range of activities both recreational and commercial providing economic output largely in rural areas.

The pandemic created significant difficulties in maintaining a range of Firearms licencing activities. Increased absence within the team, allied to an inability to conduct certain visits led to backlogs of work. This was compounded by the decision to suspend new firearms grant applications from December 21 to April 22. This decision was taken to alleviate any pressure on GP's at this critical time of vaccination, as they supply information in support of a new grant.

A significant volume of new grants have been received since the service was resumed which require expediting in order to return to the 12 week SLA for new grants. A number of mitigating measures have been put in place within the team including increasing automation and detailed demand analysis to achieve this. Additional resource has been sourced from within the force and ACRO and is currently deployed within the team. It is assessed that these will not be sufficient without an additional short-term increase of human resources to allow the backlog to be cleared.

Detailed analytical work has been commissioned to understand the challenges within the existing operating model and is ongoing. This will report in July 22, informing wider review work.

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Recommendation(s)

Funding from the COVID recovery reserve is granted for temporary posts within Firearms Licencing.

Statement on publication

*delete as appropriate:

*This Decision Record and supporting Decision Request documentation is suitable for publication.

*This Decision Record is suitable for publication. The supporting Decision Request documentation contains sensitive/confidential information and is therefore unsuitable for publication.

Police and Crime Commissioner approval

I hereby **approve** the recommendation above.

Signature:



Name:

Donna Jones

Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire

Date:

04-Jul-22

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Decision title:

Firearms licencing request for support from Covid Recovery Reserve

Requester details:

Requester: C/Supt Nigel Lecointe

Role title: Head of Intelligence and Tasking Directorate

2 Summary

Covid related delays have led to a significant backlog of work within the Firearms Licencing department of HC. The 12-week SLA for returns of new grants is currently unachievable owing to the volume of work outstanding. This is likely to affect public confidence, lead to minor economic harm and lead to increased demand into Firearms Licencing managing the complaints and concerns from the fee-paying applicants.

Both before and during the pandemic, the FL department experienced a high level of staff turnover – e.g. six of the eight enquiry officers were replaced during this time. This led to a loss of capacity due to recruitment and training requirements exacerbated by high sickness and the inability to progress work in the conventional manner owing to the pandemic.

This was compounded by an unusually high level of sickness and absence, in large part to due to Covid related illness within the team.

The team was last formally reviewed in 2017, which led to an uplift in establishment at a cost of £210,000 P/A. (Report attached) The analytical work underpinning this decision is being refreshed to inform current demand, capacity and operating model understanding.

Through this work, a range of options will be explored including general process efficiency, practice improvement, expanded Robotic Process Automation whilst seeking best practice amongst other forces.

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A Gold group has been convened to ensure appropriate oversight and grip of the ongoing work with the following objectives:

- FLD fulfils its statutory obligations, including the effective identification, management and mitigation of risk.
- That there is effective governance and oversight of FLD performance and service delivery.
- FLD has an appropriate resourcing model (human & technical) and effective resource profile to manage and service current and future demand.
- FLD has the most effective and efficient operating model /processes to service current and future demand.
- Effective staff welfare within FLD.
- Effective internal and external communications and engagement with the public and key stakeholders.

There is a clear and compelling need to ensure ongoing recovery and service delivery whilst this work is completed.

3 Recommendation(s)

Funding from the COVID recovery reserve is granted for temporary posts within Firearms Licencing:

- FEO – 2yr temporary post. – this will be a PC with costs split into year 1 and year 2 – est £59.7k/year
- Admin post agreed for six months to be extended to 1yr. Scale 5 – full years costs – est £32.7k
- Six month uplift of 2 FEO positions solely to work on new grants. – Scale 5/6 – est £38.2k
- Six month uplift of 2 Admin positions to support additional FEO's – Scale 5 – est £32.7

4 Strategic context

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This request is intended to improve access to policing services and increase public satisfaction. Firearms holders are largely represented within the rural community and for business use are a driver of economic activity.

5 Options appraisal

If this request is not granted the force will continue to reduce the ongoing backlog as soon as possible. It is highly likely that applicants will have to seek another GP referral (at their cost) as these delays will exceed six months. Public confidence will be harmed and failure demand into Firearms Licencing is likely to hinder recovery efforts.

If this request is partially approved then the risk of ongoing delays will decrease commensurate with the number of posts approved.

A full approval of the request will provide the resources required to progress through the outstanding work with speed and within the six month cut off described above. This will allow the team to move back to the 12 week SLA previously achieved for many years.

6 Timescales

There is urgency to this request given the closing time frame of new grant applications. If granted the force can implement the required uplift from internal resources swiftly.

7 Financial and resourcing implications

Total cost	£223,000
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Timeframe funding required for	5/2022 – 4/2023
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Table 1 - Funding allocation in each financial year

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Capital	0	£0	£0
Revenue	0	£163,300	£59,700

Table 2 - Funding source - Capital and Revenue

	Capital (insert 'Yes' if applicable)	Revenue (insert 'Yes' if applicable)
Transformation reserve		
Commissioner's reserve		
Commissioning budget		
Approved capital programme		
General fund		
Other- COVID Reserve		Yes

8 Communications and engagement implications

No formal communications planned but it is a subject that generates letters from applicants and discussions at public forums.

9 Legal implications

No legal implications identified.

10 Risks and mitigation

This is recorded on the ITD risk register and has been MORILE scored in order to understand the wider organisational and community risk.

Current risks relating to the delays in processing grants:

- FLD cannot process renewals before expiry and therefore people are in possessions of firearms unlawfully

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- FLD cannot review changes to applicants circumstances/information in a timely manner creating delays and unmitigated risk
- FLD cannot process new grant applications in a timely manner leading to a loss of public confidence
- The wellbeing of FLD staff is detrimentally affected by excessive, unmanaged demand.
- After 6 months, applicants will need to 'refresh' their GP referral, incurring additional cost.

Current mitigation:

- Priority given to existing holders (renewals / risk management) to avoid unlawful possession.
- Increased use of automation, alleviating administration workload.
- Short term use of ACRO and other HC staff to complete 'booking on' procedure.
- Overtime and realignment of some responsibilities to create capacity.

11 Strategic policing requirement

The capability to manage firearms licences is a national requirement for all Home Office forces.

12 Equalities

There is no believed impact with regards to equality duties.

13 Data Protection implications

There are no GDPR implications and no DPIA required.

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14 Publication status

This report is suitable for publication.

15 Personnel consulted

The following personnel were consulted on the Decision Request.

Table 3 - Personnel consulted

Role	Organisation	Confirmation of consultation (insert 'Yes' if applicable)
Chief Executive	OPCC	
Deputy Chief Executive / Criminal Justice Portfolio Lead	OPCC	
Chief Finance Officer	OPCC (HCC)	Yes
Head of Strategic Commissioning and Partnerships	OPCC	
Head of Communication and Engagement	OPCC	
Head of Performance and Information	OPCC	
Head of Standards and Compliance	OPCC	
Head of Estate, Operations and Support	OPCC	
Programme Office Manager	OPCC	
Accountant	OPCC (HCC)	
Deputy Monitoring Officer	OPCC (HCC)	
Head of Strategic Procurement	HCC	
Commissioning and Partnerships Officer	OPCC	
<i>[others as appropriate]</i>		

OPCC- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

HCC – Hampshire County Council

16 Appendices

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Microsoft Word
Document

2017 Report / Review of FL.

17 Background papers

See appendix