

PFCC Decision Report

Report reference number: 094-24

Classification: Not protectively marked

Title of report: Consolidated Hotspot Response 2024-25 Grant Agreement

Area of county / stakeholders affected: Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Colchester, Epping Forest, Harlow, Southend, Tendring and Thurrock

Report by: Pippa Brent-Isherwood (Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer)

Chief Officer: Pippa Brent-Isherwood (Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer)

Date of report: 15 May 2024

Enquiries to:

Pippa Brent-Isherwood (Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer)

Claire Hanrahan (Commissioning Lead)

1. Executive Summary

Essex has been allocated up to £1,637,769 Home Office funding to deliver hotspot responses to serious violence and anti-social behaviour in 2024/25. The Home Office approved Essex's delivery proposal on 1 May 2024 and is now seeking execution of the associated grant agreement.

2. Recommendations

That the PFCC accepts the offer of the grant and agrees to comply with the terms and conditions on which it is made by delegating authority to their Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, as the Scheme Manager, and their Strategic Head of Performance and Resources, as the Senior Finance Officer, to sign and return to the Home Office the grant agreement attached at Appendix 1.

3. Background to the Proposal

Since 2022, the Government has provided “Grip” funding for the 20 police force areas (including Essex) experiencing the highest levels of serious violence. This has funded a combination of regular visible patrols in hotspot areas with the aim of suppressing violence and providing community reassurance, along with problem-oriented policing (POP) tactics.

In March 2023, the Government launched its ASB Action Plan and funded 10 pilot areas (including Essex) to increase police and partner presence in targeted hotspot areas from July 2023 to March 2024. This scheme is now being rolled out to all police force areas in England and Wales in 2024/25.

The existing funding streams for Grip (serious violence) and ASB hotspot response have naturally overlapping functions and geographies. Consequently, in December 2023, Ministers approved the merging of the two programmes in order to enhance efficiency and resource utilisation.

4. Proposal and Associated Benefits

This grant is being provided to tackle serious violence and anti-social behaviour by enhancing visibility of the police and other uniformed presence in the streets and neighbourhoods worst affected by these offence types. It will be used to deliver hotspot policing, which is strongly evidenced, both nationally and internationally, to prevent and reduce crime and disorder. The scheme will also allow the implementation of problem-oriented policing (POP) to tackle the drivers of serious violence and anti-social behaviour in hotspots. This will include the deployment of OpenGate, a state-of-the-art weapons detection system, in Operation Grip areas.

Operation Grip will target 15 treatment and 15 control hotspots (so 30 in total). These currently remain unchanged from those identified in 2023/24 but will be reviewed in August 2024 once they have been treated for 12 months and the impact on serious violence can be better assessed. Patrols will last between 15 and 30 minutes depending on the size of the hotspot.

Operation Dial will target 15 hotspots across 11 of the county’s 13 Community Safety Partnership (CSP) areas. Foot patrols lasting between two and four hours will be conducted by police and community safety partners. Those areas with the highest need will also benefit from detached youth work.

Use of the funding is intended to deliver the following outcomes and impact:

- Reduction in crimes / incidents and community perceptions in the hotspots
- Funded patrol hours
- Arrests, stop and searches, exercise of ASB powers and seizure of weapons

The impact will be evidenced through data provided to the Home Office on patrolling, via comparison of crime and anti-social behaviour figures in hotspot areas with wider force trends, and through the findings of public confidence surveys commissioned by the Home Office. The evaluation will measure:

- The impact on community perceptions in the hotspots, including concern about ASB, the numbers of people reporting, experiencing and witnessing ASB, and levels of trust and confidence in the police and in reporting ASB
- The impact on crime and ASB in the hotspots, including police recorded homicide, violence (including knife and sharps offences), robbery, criminal damage, public order, possession offences and ASB incidents
- The impact on crime outcomes (the number and rate of cautions and convictions and other positive crime outcomes for the offences listed above)

At present, the scheme is being funded for the 2024/25 financial year only. Either party may request changes to the grant agreement during the funding period. The grant agreement may also be terminated during the term by either party by giving the other at least three months' (or other agreed time period) notice in writing.

5. Options Analysis

The PFCC could choose not to accept this grant, and therefore either not to fund a hotspot policing approach to serious violence and ASB, or to fund these within existing resources, with consequent reductions in other areas. In this scenario, there could be a lack of visible presence in areas of relatively high serious violence and ASB, thereby undermining public safety and perceptions of police and other authority figures. This option is therefore not recommended.

6. Consultation and Engagement

The delivery plan to which this grant agreement relates was developed in full consultation with Essex Police via Chief Supt Leighton Hammett, Supt Gary Biddle and DCI Neal Miller. Hotspots were selected based on police data, community intelligence gathered through the PFCC's public engagement programme, and consultation with Community Safety Partnerships across Essex.

Ongoing engagement with delivery partners and Communications leads will continue on a quarterly basis in order to share data, evaluation, good practice and problem-solving approaches.

7. Strategic Links

The scheme is consistent with the building block of prevention set out in the Police and Crime Plan. It will support reductions in crime and the harm it causes and will complement the local and national levelling up agendas. In line with the Police and Crime Plan, the approach also recognises that, to improve the safety of our communities, we must work closely in partnership with other services across Essex to prevent crime and protect the vulnerable. The scheme will also help to deliver a number of specific commitments within the Police and Crime Plan, as follows:

Priority	Commitment
Further investment in crime prevention	Invest in neighbourhood policing to get crime down. Work with Safer Essex and in line with the Crime Prevention Strategy to invest more in preventing crime in Essex. Build on the success of Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) by encouraging increased targeting of hotspots, including in the night-time economy, and known offenders to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB). Work with partners to design out crime.
Reducing drug driven violence	Provide further investment in the Essex Police Serious Violence Unit to dismantle more county lines drugs gangs. Protect vulnerable people from gangs while we deal with the hardened criminals who prey on them. Encourage and facilitate cooperation between public bodies in line with the public sector duty to reduce serious violence.
Reducing violence against women and girls	Encourage measures to make public space free from abuse and harassment.
Improving support for victims of crime	Deliver tailored, multi-agency interventions to reduce the number of people becoming victims.

The scheme will also support delivery of the Government’s ASB Action Plan and the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) which sets out what, in the Home Secretary’s view, are the current national threats and the appropriate national policing capabilities required to counter those threats.

8. Police operational implications

All ASB (Operation Dial) police patrols will be conducted on overtime. This approach will secure additional capacity and capability to tackle ASB rather than diverting resources away from Town Centre and Community Policing Teams. Serious violence (Operation Grip) patrols will be delivered as business as usual where possible (as now) and through overtime where this is not viable.

Operation Grip complements the work of the Violence and Vulnerability Unit, and the teams meet monthly in order to share best practice and ideas.

Operation Dial is complemented by the use of the PFCC’s national and local Safer Streets Funds.

9. Financial implications

As set out in section 1 above, Essex has been allocated up to £1,637,769 Home Office funding to deliver hotspot responses to serious violence and anti-social behaviour in 2024/25. The full delivery proposal is attached at Annex E to the grant agreement. Within this, the response to serious violence (Operation Grip) has been allocated £750,000 whilst the response to ASB (Operation Dial) has been allocated £887,769.

The PFCC is required to account for the grant on an accruals basis and will submit a quarterly grant claim form and narrative progress report to the Home Office in order to

draw down payment. Although the grant agreement was not received until May, eligible expenditure may be claimed with effect from 1 April 2024. The grant amount will not be increased in the event of any overspend by the PFCC or any of their delivery partners.

As referenced in section 4 above, the Home Office has not provided any commitment to renew or continue this financial support to the PFCC beyond 31 March 2025 at this stage. Funding must therefore be used to fund activity within this financial year only.

10. Legal implications

The Home Secretary has powers under section 169 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to provide financial support to the PFCC in connection with measures intended to prevent crime or reduce the fear of crime.

The grant agreement sets out the legally binding terms and conditions which apply to the grant. It shall be subject to and construed in accordance with English law and subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of England and Wales.

11. Staffing implications

The programme is sponsored by Deputy Chief Constable Andy Prophet. Management of the scheme will be delivered as business as usual, within existing resources:

- The PFCC's Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer will act as the Scheme Manager and have responsibility for ensuring achievement of the intended outcomes and impact.
- The Programme Leads will be D/Supt Gary Biddle (Senior Investigating Officer) for serious violence and Claire Hanrahan (Commissioning Lead) for ASB.
- Dr. Natalie Mann (Head of Research and Analysis) will be the Analytical Lead.
- The Finance Leads will be Samantha Jackson (Management Accountant) for Essex Police and Janet Perry (Strategic Head of Performance and Resources) for the PFCC.

12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion implications

The PFCC is forbidden from using the funding to engage a delivery partner, member of staff or third party known to oppose "fundamental British values", defined by the Home Office as universal human rights, gender equality, equality of opportunity, democracy, the rule of law, respect for the rights of different religions and beliefs, and freedom of speech.

13. Risks and Mitigations

As with any grant funding, there is a risk of funds being misappropriated, which will be mitigated through the application of the policies and procedures referenced in the PFCC's and Chief Constable's shared Anti-Fraud and Bribery Commitment. Prior to awarding any onward funding, contract or other legal agreement with a delivery partner, the PFCC will carry out thorough, proportionate and documented due diligence to understand that organisation's financial status, viability and capacity,

technical skills and capacity, operational and commercial processes and procedures, and fraud risk, and ensure that any such payment does not represent duplicate funding or grant fraud.

14. Governance Boards

The approach to the delivery plan was agreed by the PFCC and the Chief Constable at their Formal Performance Meeting on 5 March 2024.

The existing internal governance of Operations Grip and Dial will be combined under a single steering group which will meet six weekly and be chaired by the PFCC's Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer.

15. Links to Future Plans

Part of the funding will be used to work with Nottingham Trent University to develop a model to identify geographical areas of greater vulnerability to ASB through evidence-based statistical mapping at a neighbourhood and street segment level across the Essex Police force area. This will be used to inform the implementation of a hotspot approach to tackling ASB by Essex Police and its partners going forward.

16. Background Papers and Appendices

Appendix 1 - Grant Agreement between the Secretary of State for the Home Department and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner of Essex – Consolidated Hotspot Response for the Period 01 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

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: 16 May 2024

Chief Finance Officer

Sign

Print: Janet Perry

Date: 16 May 2024

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*)

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:

N/A

Date redaction carried out:

Chief Finance Officer / Chief Executive Sign Off – for Redactions only

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

Sign:

Print:

Chief Executive / Chief Finance Officer

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign: 

Print: Roger Hirst

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: 16/05/2024

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

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.....
.....

Sign:

Print:

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: