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Yvette Cooper MP
Chair, Home Affairs Committee
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By email only

27 April 2020

Dear Chair,

I am writing to inform you of two changes to the police funding settlement for 2020/21. The Police Grant Report 2020/21 and accompanying Written Ministerial Statement were laid in the House on 22 January and approved on 24 February. These changes relate to the timing of the payment of the police pension grant (£142.6m) and the design of the police recruitment ringfence (£168m) in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

By working together with forces, the NPCC and the College of Policing, we are making significant progress in the recruitment of 20,000 new officers. Since launching in September, a significant number of officers have already joined at the most crucial of times and will bolster resilience and ability to protect the public.

I am, however, acutely aware of the potential, indeed likelihood, for COVID-19 to disrupt the delivery of the Police Uplift Programme. Whilst the scale of this impact is still emerging, the Home Secretary and I are determined to continue to press ahead with the Programme and we are highly impressed with the incredible commitment to recruitment that we have seen forces demonstrate so far. I would also like to highlight the national response, led by the College of Policing under the leadership of Mike Cunningham. The College is leading the way in developing a virtual assessment process to support all forces in resuming recruitment as soon as possible, thus minimising the impact of COVID-19 upon police recruitment.

Of course, any disruption to recruitment will occur concurrently with the potential for increased financial pressures on police forces, for example from greater overtime costs due to absences of those unwell or self-isolating, or from the purchase of personal protective equipment essential to keeping our police safe. The resulting cashflow issues for police forces, at a time where

they can ill afford to slow down or stop vital activity, has been central to the work of the Department in collaboration with the sector. I believe that some changes to how we are financing forces are needed and, on that front, the Government has taken two immediate actions.

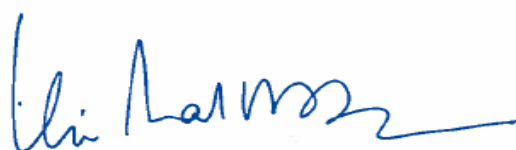
First, we have brought forward payment of the £142.6m pensions grant, which forces will have now received. This is a non-ringfenced grant which has been paid two months earlier than usual and will hopefully contribute to easing the short-term cashflow issues that some forces are facing.

Secondly, we have also revised our approach to the Police Uplift Programme ringfence. The police funding settlement for 2020/21 set out that £168m of the additional funding for recruitment this year would be ringfenced and paid to forces quarterly upon proof of recruitment and expenditure on associated costs. In light of the circumstances, we have agreed that half of this funding (£84m) will be 'repurposed' to allow for expenditure on both COVID-19 related pressures and continued Police Uplift Programme recruitment activity. Forces' maximum shares of this ringfence will continue to be split according to the Police Funding Formula. The funding will be paid monthly for a six-month period. My officials will draw up the grant agreements, which will be sent to forces as soon as possible. It is important to restate that we remain committed to delivery of the Police Uplift Programme. I remain highly confident, despite COVID-19, that we will deliver on this year's commitment to recruit 6,000 new officers. This decision is intended to provide police with the flexibility they need now. At the end of the six months we will review whether continued flexibility is required.

The measures I have outlined above set out a flexible and pragmatic approach to the use of existing funding. However, I recognise that forces may require additional support to relieve financial pressures they are incurring from responding to the pandemic. As you know, my officials have already been working closely with policing sector finance leads and others to capture forces' emerging pressures and are continuing to monitor these cost estimates regularly to ensure all forces get the resource they require. I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your continued engagement on this over the coming weeks and months.

This approach will be kept under review. I believe this is a sensible package of measures which will help the police respond to their priorities in both the short and medium-term.

A copy of this letter will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kit Malthouse', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kit Malthouse MP
Minister of State for Crime and Policing