

**AUTHOR: Deb Shaw****SPONSOR: ACC Rhiannon Kirk****DECISION NUMBER: 04-2022**  
*(to be completed on approval)***SUBMITTED TO: Chris Nelson, Police & Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire****SUBJECT: Proposed increase in Force Control Room establishment – additional 10 FTE call handlers****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The current performance issues in the Force Control Room are well documented and feature prominently in the HMICFRS PEEL Inspection report. Work is underway to update and improve the systems and technology within the FCR as well as improvements to the working environment and culture.

Detailed recruitment plans are in place and from the May 2022 intake, FCR will start to exceed the current establishment of 93.59 FTE and start to grow. Current plans are for growth of 10 FTE and these are already funded as part of the uplift growth.

This paper outlines the benefits that an additional 10 FTE call handlers could provide, which include improved resilience and improved performance.

It should be noted that experience from recent recruitment processes has demonstrated the difficulties in securing new call handlers – this is a combination of labour shortages and finding candidates with the appropriate potential to fulfil this challenging and demanding role. The reality is that there are insufficient candidates available to fill the existing vacancies, however, a great deal of work is being undertaken to increase the recruitment pool and identify suitable candidates.

The paper details the principle of employing the equivalent of 10 FTE staff at peak demand times to ensure that resources match demand. It has been suggested that these staff could be from areas such as university students or others looking to work flexibly.

At this time, the cost of an additional 10 FTE is not known and will be subject to further work as the final cost will only be apparent once final shift patterns have been determined. This work is ongoing and is a matter of priority.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

PCC Governance Board is asked to support the following recommendation:-

1. **Note the work that is already being progressed to recruit staff into the FCR along with the associated difficulties**
2. **Approve (in principle) to the recruitment of an additional 10 FTE staff – subject to a subsequent paper which will detail their shift pattern, total costs and how that growth will be funded.**

PCCG is asked to note that even if recommendation 2 is approved at the May meeting, it is unlikely that staff will actually be present in the FCR until the new financial year.

**Specific business benefits:-**

- FCR performance is a key concern from the HMICFRS PEEL inspection and additional staff will assist with improving performance
- Performance in the FCR will improve with additional staff and improvement in systems
- Public contact is part of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Police and Crime Prevention Plan

**Person responsible for implementation:-**

ACC Rhiannon Kirk and Deb Shaw.

**OUTCOME/APPROVAL BY:**



Signature:

Date: 24.05.22

**Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire**

**THIS SECTION IS REQUIRED FOR ALL PAPERS WHICH WILL BE  
REMITTED TO THE PCC GOVERNANCE BOARD**

### Public Access to Information

*Information continued within Constabulary papers is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Reports which are submitted for consideration at PCC Governance Board are likely to be made public. If the paper contains sensitive information then please detail below.*

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Is this a decision of significant public interest?</b></p> <p><i>This includes a decision with any impact on the community, expenditure in excess of £50,000, or any decision that would be of obvious interest to the media or the general public</i></p>   | <p><b>Yes</b> – an additional 10FTE staff in the FCR is likely to cost in excess of a £50,000.</p>          |
| <p><b>Does this report contain sensitive information?</b></p> <p><i>Does this report contain any information which falls into these categories?</i></p> <p>a) <i>would, in the view of the chief officer of the police, be against the interests of national security;</i><br/> b) <i>might, in the view of the chief officer of police, jeopardise the safety of any person;</i><br/> c) <i>might, in the view of the chief officer of police, prejudice the prevention or detection of crime, the apprehension or prosecution of offenders, or the administration of justice; or</i><br/> d) <i>is prohibited by any enactment.</i><br/> e) <i>breaches commercial sensitivity</i></p> | <p><b>Record which section(s) applies and explain why.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>No</b></p> |

| <b>ORIGINATOR CHECKLIST (MUST BE COMPLETED)</b>   | <b>Comments<br/>These sections must not be left blank</b>  |
|---|--|
| Has legal advice been sought on this submission if required?  | No.  |
| Has the Chief Finance Officer been consulted, if required?  | Yes – when the makeup of the additional 10FTE is known this will be subject to consideration in budget setting for 2023/ 24. |
| Have equality, diversity and human rights implications been considered, as appropriate?               | Yes  |
| How is the recommendation consistent with the objectives of the Police and Crime Plan (PCP)?          | Yes  |
| Has consultation been undertaken with people or agencies likely to be affected by the recommendation? | No   |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Has communications advice been sought on areas of likely media, community, staff or partner interest and how they might be managed? | No  |
| Have all relevant implications and risks been considered?   | Yes |
| Has this paper / proposal been submitted through any other Constabulary boards? If so, please detail along with the result.         | No  |

## **PART ONE – For publication**

### **1. Purpose of the report**

The paper seeks support from the PCC to approve (in principle) an additional 10 FTE call handlers for the FCR. This will be in addition to the 10 FTE already approved as part of the uplift growth.

The additional staff will be used on flexible work patterns to address demand at peak times and improve the ability of the Constabulary to answer 999 and 101 calls promptly and within the nationally agreed time frames. (Full details are contained in the attached appendix).

### **2. Background**

The current performance issues in the Force Control Room are well documented and feature prominently in the HMICFRS PEEL Inspection report (see attached paper for details of their comments and how additional staff would address these areas for improvement).

The current establishment in the FCR for call handlers and dispatchers is 93.59 FTE. The current uplift growth of 10 FTE will take this total to 103.59FTE - this recruitment process is currently underway.

This paper proposes an additional 10 FTE staff into the FCR.

They will be deployed flexibly at peak demand times to ensure an effective response by the Force.

Examples of the shift patterns which are being recruited to include:

- 24/7 Full Time
- 24/7 Part Time (Job Share)
- Day Working (0900x1400hrs Mon-Fri)
- First Night Watch (Half night shifts Thu-Fri-Sat)

These patterns not only support the call demand profile but also allows FCR to target particular sectors of the job market such as returning to work parents, those with caring commitments and those limited on working hours, as well as university students who are able to work evenings/ weekends. The flexible part time patterns also means that the resources can be scheduled across the periods of greatest demand, providing extra capability to match call demand.

### **Potential barriers to increased recruitment**

Whilst any increase in establishment for the FCR will be welcomed, growth of this magnitude is not without challenges, the most significant being the quality of candidates coming forward for the roles. A large proportion are not passing the interview process or do not have the required skills required for the role.

This is a national problem currently affecting recruitment in policing, where people are applying for jobs in the private sector due to the flexibility of working from home and the ability to command more money than public sector – all these factors combined means that the police service is (in general terms) attracting applicants who do not meet our required high standards.

This is making the recruitment process more drawn out at times as it means recruiting 10 people for each intake course is challenging – often places are unused on each intake due to the lack of suitable candidates. This is despite efforts across the organisation to attract staff.

New intakes are currently scheduled for every 3 months – this allows for vetting, HR and administrative processes to be completed.

It is only possible to train 10 people per course, and there are only 2 weeks between different courses, so adding in additional training courses in between these set dates isn't possible. Training dates can continue to be added 3 months after the previous one which means continuing into April 2023.

### **3. Options**

The options for consideration at PCCG are:

1. Approve the proposal to increase staffing with the FCR by an additional 10 FTE
2. Do nothing and continue with the current uplift

### **Recommendation**

#### **PCCG is asked to approve option 1.**

It should be noted that approval is being sought to approve the concept of an additional 10 FTE subject to additional work around shift patterns and final confirmation of the total costs along with proposals on how this will be funded. It is suggested that this final business case will be available by July 2022 PCCG.

PCCG is also asked to note that even if permission is given to progress this proposal, it is unlikely that the staff will be in a position to be operational until the new financial year.

#### **4. Financial and resource implications**

The cost of an additional 10 FTE is unknown at this time as the final cost will depend on the exact shift pattern to which they are deployed as different shift patterns attract different allowances. For discussion purposes each FTE including shift allowances to cover weekend and evening working cost approximately £42k p.a. Staff working with no shift allowance cost approximately £31k p.a. The difference in cost means that the detail of the final blend of staff can have a significant difference on cost. However, it is clear that the growth of 10 FTE is going to be largely unfunded within the existing budget baseline and therefore it will have to be found from existing budgets elsewhere in the Constabulary.

The CFO has pointed out how challenging finding the funding for these additional staff will be in the current high inflation economy.

Whilst there is some opportunity to utilise the FCR underspend from the last financial year, this will be one-off funding which won't support the ongoing salary requirement.

Work will have to be undertaken to identify the required funding but it is likely that other posts within the organisation will have to be gapped or deleted to offset the cost of the additional FCR resources. The request for additional growth is being made ahead of the full business and financial planning cycle for 2023/34 to allow for the lead time in recruitment/training to be planned for, in anticipation of the FCR being identified as a continued priority in FMS 5 and for early progress in the next FY to be secured and to provide flexibility to respond for any potential process/efficiency changes identified as part of the Continuous Improvement Project which has commenced in the FCR.

#### **5. Risk assessment**

It has been suggested that the Constabulary will find itself near quartile of soon to be published national league tables for call handling performance in relation to 999 and 101 calls into the FCR.

This is not a position which the Constabulary wants to continue to be in especially in light of the recent HMICFRS PEEL inspection comments. Significant stabilisation work has been underway to address and mitigate the performance challenges (including work to stabilise systems) and planning for additional staff will complement and further enhance that stabilisation work.

If action is not taken to address the performance in the FCR environment, the public may start to lose confidence in the ability of the Constabulary to effectively respond to emergency incidents. This has the potential to lead to a loss of legitimacy.

## **6. Equality & Diversity impact assessment**

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 states that a public authority should carry out an assessment prior to implementing a policy or initiative, with a view to ascertaining its potential impact on equality. Whilst assessments are not required by law, they are a way of facilitating and evidencing compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## **7. Environmental impact assessment**

There is no environmental impact to this paper.

## **8. Consultation**

Not undertaken at this time.

## **9. Discussed with Communications & Engagement**

Not undertaken at this time.

## **10. Conclusion**

ACC Kirk is leading the work on addressing concerns about FCR`s ability to answer 999 and 101 calls within the required timeframes.

A great deal of work has already been completed in relation to improving systems and processes but a lack of staff has always meant that improvements have been limited.

Whilst the 10 FTE already approved as part of the uplift programme is welcomed, it is short of the original proposal of an uplift of 30 FTE which was precluded by the ability of the PCC to raise the precept by the required amount.

This paper proposes an additional 10FTE in the FCR to address peak demand.

### **SPONSORING BOARD MEMBER APPROVAL**

**Name:** ACC Kirk

**Job title:** Assistant Chief Constable

**Signature:** 

**Date:** 23/05/2022

### **CHIEF EXECUTIVE APPROVAL**

I am satisfied that relevant advice has been taken into account in the preparation of the report and that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the PCC.



**Signature:**

**Date: 23 May 2022**

### **Appendix for reference**

1 – Paper by Debbie Shaw – Head of Contact Management, Force Control Room