

Meeting	Police and Crime Panel
Date	10 <sup>th</sup> December 2020
Report Title	Operation Uplift Update
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### **Purpose of report**

1. This report provides an update on the progress of Operation Uplift.
2. The Force remains on track to deliver the requirements of Uplift and increase the number of officers in Wiltshire Police. Plans are in place to achieve the first phase of the requirement by the end of 2020/21, and assessments by the national programme team place Wiltshire in a good position.

### **Introduction and background information**

3. As raised within the previous paper presented at the September Panel meeting, the national Uplift programme is an opportunity to increase resourcing and re-invest in policing further to a ten-year period of austerity and a fall in police officer numbers.
4. The service has been asked to introduce 2,000 extra officers by March 2020, rising to 6,000 extra officers by March 2021.
5. Wiltshire has been allocated 49 extra officers by March 2021. High level assumptions continue to be made on financial and workforce plans for beyond March 2021, which suggest a total number of 147 extra officers by March 2023. This is likely to change as more information becomes available about regional and national functions receiving a proportion of the officer uplift.
6. In order to achieve the uplift numbers, in addition to maintaining the numbers required due to officers leaving the organisation, Wiltshire will be required to recruit approximately over 400 officers up to March 2023. It is estimated at this stage that one in eight applicants get through the process, resulting in needing approximately 3,200 applicants for police officer jobs in Wiltshire – this is a huge requirement.

7. The current intakes and 'landing' dates are as follows:

Start Training	Officers	Landing in teams	Finish Tutorship
Jun-20 (first PEQF)	40	Dec-20	Feb-21
Oct-20	20	Apr-21	Jun-21
Jan-21	40	Jul-21	Sep-21
Mar-21	20	Aug-21	Oct-21
Jun-21	40	Dec-21	Feb-22
Oct-21	20	Apr-22	Jun-22

Figure one: Officer intake timeline

8. At the September panel meeting, it was requested that the overview of intakes, attrition and budget were provided. The below graph shows what the Force uses to plan and project recruitment for police officers against budget.

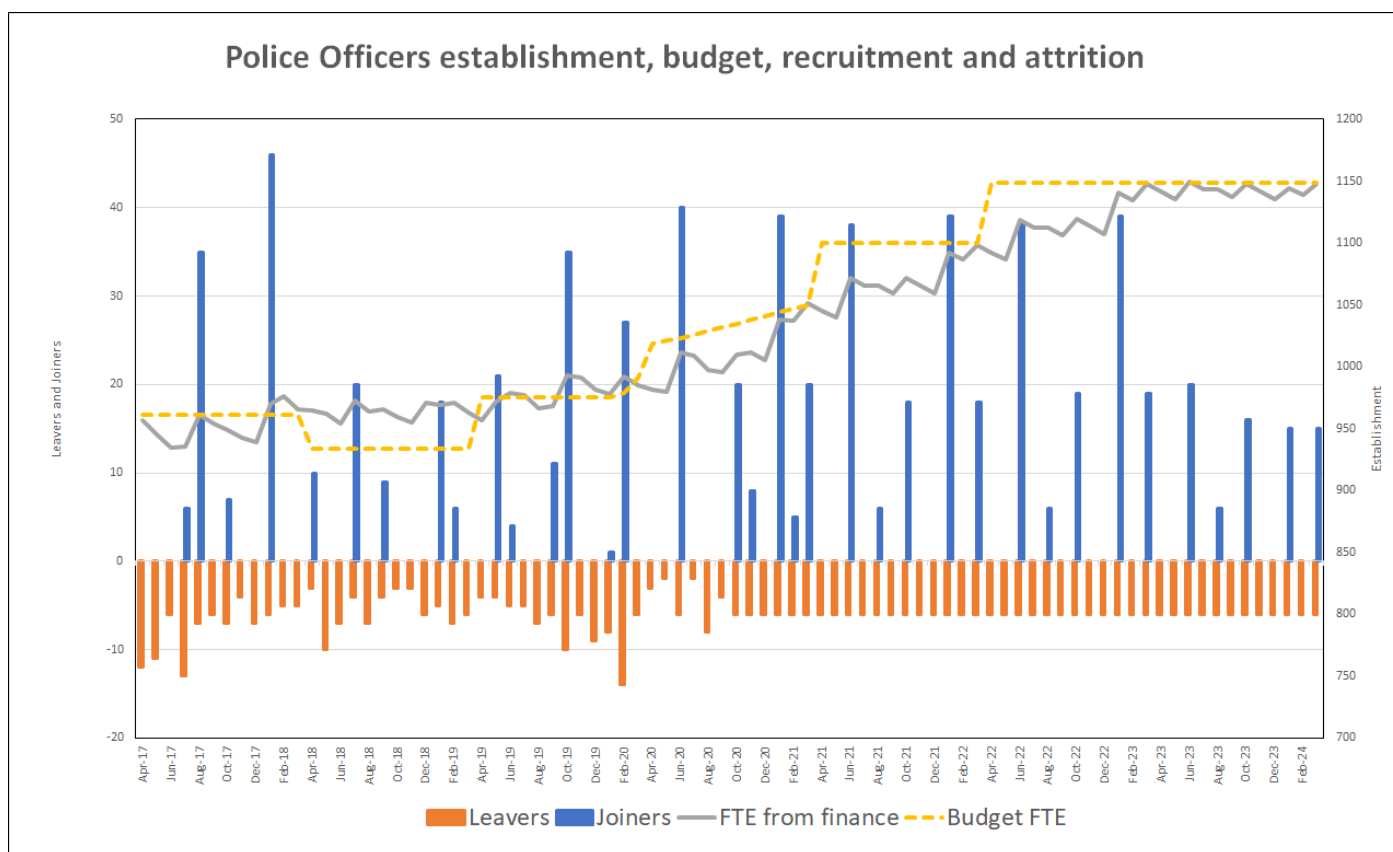


Figure two: Recruitment Plan

9. This shows the volume of officers leaving or projected to leave the organisation (red bar facing down), against the volume and frequency of new officers coming into the organisation (blue bar facing upwards). The red bars are temperamental and, in many ways, uncontrollable as officers transfer to other Forces or retire. With months seeing large fluctuations in 'leavers' and 'joiners', it makes it more challenging to deliver recruitment to the required levels.

10. The yellow dotted line on the graph is the budget line, and the grey filled line is the current establishment. It is the intention that these two lines match each other.

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

11. Having a Police Force which is reflective of the community it serves is a vital pillar of British Policing. The planned 20,000 uplift in police officer numbers announced in 2019 offers policing a once-in-a-generation opportunity to dramatically improve the diversity of its police officer workforce. Many suggest that diversity in policing must be addressed urgently if forces are to retain the confidence of minority communities.

12. Wiltshire Police's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team have been a key function to work with communities and break down barriers to full representation across the organisation. Through the work that has been done to date, it is clear to recognise just how challenging it is to make quick progress in this area.

13. The team have been extensively supporting protected characteristics which are under-represented within the organisation (BAME and/or Female) and carrying out a range of support mechanisms from explaining what Policing is about at engagement events, to outlining and supporting the process of the SEARCH assessment to applicants.

14. To make a real difference in the make-up of the organisation, we must start at the beginning by understanding the current barriers and encourage people from protected characteristics to join Policing. We know that there is a long period of time between application and joining an intake as a Student Officer and so this means that significant efforts can take a long time before they are realised.

15. Nationally, workforce statistics for all Forces are being collected and scrutinised closely in relation to representation against protected characteristics. This will include comparisons to local demographics, similar Forces and previous trends. Forces will be highlighted by the Home Office.

16. I continue to be encouraged with the mind-set, leadership and activity to address diversity within Wiltshire Police, and recognise that this is a strand of work which requires long term commitment. We are starting to see some positive movement in the volumes of applicants within the most recent campaign in March 2020, and this is expected to continue throughout the Uplift Programme.

### **Current officers in training**

17. It was reported previously that the College of Policing communicated an ability for Forces to derogate training, ensuring accreditation for an initial period of three months until 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020. This has been extended to the end of the calendar year to enable Wiltshire to deal with subsequent backlogs of training.

18. The amount of training the Force can do was previously increasing, however due to the recent lockdown, is limited to mandatory refresher courses and key operational training requirements. All face-to-face training is conducted in a COVID secure environment, with adapted course content to ensure COVID secure practice. Online training continues for Student Officers and Student PCSOs, with planned role-play exercises and essential in-person training taking place towards the latter part of the training programme.

19. Currently there are 60 officers in training, which includes 40 from the June 2020 intake, and 20 from the October 2020 intake. The June intake are passing out on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December. We are now preparing to receive 40 officers who are starting on the 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021.
20. The PEQF programme continues to be implemented successfully and preparation is taking place to build the courses for PCSOs and Special Constables in 2021. Information on the PQF is available in previous reports.
21. The student officers that have been released early through the initial stages of lockdown have been under close support and monitoring since leaving the People Development department. Local officers, the assessment team and HR advisors have been supporting this and providing any feedback on the cohorts that have been released early, indicating any patterns of performance (adverse or positive) as a result of their early release from training. At this time, no notable exceptions have been identified.

## **SEARCH Assessment**

22. The ability for forces to continue to recruit new officers during the COVID-19 pandemic is crucial to maintaining police officer numbers and keeping the public safe. To enable the service to continue with planned recruitment, the College of Policing have worked at pace, with colleagues across the service, to develop an interim solution that enables all forces to continue the recruitment of police constables without the need for face-to-face contact.
23. An online process has been developed that enables effective assessment of the required competencies and values and meets the current standards for assessing new recruits. This temporarily replaces the existing SEARCH assessment process for new recruits. The College of Policing have guaranteed the online assessment until July 2021 and it is due to be reviewed in March 2021.
24. The College are working closely with the Police Uplift Programme team and forces on an implementation plan so that the online assessment process is available for all forces when needed.
25. Wiltshire Police launched a campaign on the 9<sup>th</sup> March which aimed to bring in 300 applicants to support the next phase of Uplift recruitment. This was achieved within 5 days. Following initial checks and withdrawals, this has reduced to 217 applicants who went through the online SEARCH process on 9<sup>th</sup> November. The online assessment is positive for Wiltshire in relation to ensuring enough places can be confirmed for candidates, as there was always a challenge to get enough spaces on the assessment and ensure travel was not an issue for candidates. However, we have also seen some candidates experience technical difficulties which has reduced the number of people completing the assessment.
26. As this is a new process, there are unknown elements as to what proportion will succeed, however, from previous figures we may expect between 45%-50% to pass the SEARCH assessment. The pass rate will be confirmed week commencing 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020.
27. Wiltshire currently has 88 applicants who have previously passed the SEARCH processes and are awaiting finalisation of checks before they will be given intake dates. The Force predicts that this will provide enough student officers through to March 2021, when candidates from the March

2020 campaign will start joining under PEQF. This effectively means that the next time the Force will be recruiting again for student officers will be in the middle of 2021. Plans are already underway to deliver an innovative and effective campaign in 2021.

28. It is currently unknown how COVID will impact on recruitment figures and processes in the long term. There is a chance that candidates could be more likely to not want to join due to factors such as instability, finances or risk. Alternatively, it could attract more positive attention in the way policing has supported the Country through COVID and how the roles can provide some stability in these uncertain times. Only time will tell.

## **Summary**

29. Overall, there has been a significant amount of change for the Uplift programme due to COVID. It has been a clear priority from the College and the Government to continue with this programme and as outlined in this report, most amendments have supported Forces to continue recruiting new officers, and in some cases provided new opportunities.

30. Wiltshire continues to be meeting the planned intake volumes and expects to meet the Uplift numbers required.