

**DMPC Decision – PCD 960****Title** Home Office Funding Project Alpha Social Media Hub 2021/22**Executive Summary:**

This paper seeks approval to accept the Home Office offer of grant funding for 2021/22 of upto £1,968,676.24. The funding will support the on-going work of the Project Alpha Social Media Hub (SMH) to deliver an enhanced response to tackle gang related serious violence and organised criminality that includes county line offending by taking action against online activity.

**Recommendation:**

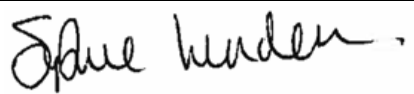
The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime is recommended to:

1. approve acceptance of Home Office Grant funding of upto a maximum of £1,968,676.24 to fund the Social Media Hub in the 2021/2022 financial year. Funding will reflect actual expenditure incurred during current financial year.
2. approve the continuation of Project Alpha Social Media Hub with existing staff levels to address the threat, risk and harm of gang violence and organised crime perpetuated through online activity.

**Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime**

I confirm I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial interest in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct. Any such interests are recorded below.

The above request has my approval.

**Signature****Date** 19/03/2021

## **PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE DMPC**

### **1. Introduction and background**

- 1.1. This is a continuation of funding previously approved by MOPAC PCD545, PCD867 and PCD914.
- 1.2. The current grant funding ceases on 31/03/2021 and the grant offered for continuation will be for financial year 2021/22 only in line with the chancellor's decision of a one year spending review.

### **2. Issues for consideration**

- 2.1. The proposed grant funding will support the MOPAC Police & Crime Plan by focusing on investigation, enforcement and disruption work against high harm gangs utilising a range of tactics. In addition it will make referrals to social media companies for the removal of illegal and harmful content intended to incite serious violence
- 2.2. The core aims of the Hub are to:
  - Deliver a strategy to tackle the growing issue of threat, risk and harm generated by gangs through their use of social media platforms that perpetuates serious youth violence and facilitates organised crime.
  - Develop best practice in partnership with other Police Forces, agencies and the industry to enhance the response of law enforcement. Advancing skills, knowledge and the use of technology to deliver innovative and effective solutions.
  - Gauge the scale of the threat and associated demand on law enforcement. Allow for analysis of gang network exploitation – e.g. recruitment into county lines, child criminal and sexual exploitation.
  - Continued development of a national intelligence network, which would be the UK's first dedicated intelligence function designed to tackle gang criminality and the associated violence.

### **3. Financial Comments**

- 3.1. This proposal seeks approval to accept upto £1,968,676.24 of Home Office grant funding for 2021/22. The grant will support the funding of staff and officers as well as equipment and specialist training.

### **4. Legal Comments**

- 4.1. The Home Office will pay the additional grant to the Metropolitan Police in exercise of the power conferred by Section 56 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004).
- 4.2. MOPAC may accept the offer of the Grant pursuant to Schedule 3 Paragraph 7 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 ("2001 Act") where MOPAC may do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the exercise of the functions of the Office which includes entering into contracts and other agreements (whether legally binding or not).

- 4.3. Paragraph 4.8 of MOPAC's Scheme of Delegation and Consent requires the approval of the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime to approve the receipt of the grant.

## **5. GDPR and Data Privacy**

- 5.1. MOPAC will adhere to the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and ensure that any organisations who are commissioned to do work with or on behalf of MOPAC are fully compliant with the policy and understand their GDPR responsibilities.
- 5.2. MPS assure that a DPIA has been completed which concluded that the risk of a data breach occurring was low based on current practices.

## **6. Equality Comments**

- 6.1. MOPAC is required to comply with the public sector equality duty set out in section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010. This requires MOPAC to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations by reference to people with protected characteristics. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 6.2. MPS assure that this business case has undergone a full equalities impact assessment with no negative impact identified at this stage.

## **7. Background/supporting papers**

- Appendix 1 MPS Report Project Alpha Social Media Hub Continued Home Office Funding (Financial Year 2021/2022)

**Public access to information**

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and will be made available on the MOPAC website following approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

**Part 1 Deferral:**

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If yes, for what reason:

Until what date: n/a

**Part 2 Confidentiality:** Only the facts or advice considered as likely to be exempt from disclosure under the FOIA should be in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a **Part 2** form – YES

**ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION**

*Tick to confirm statement (✓)*

**Financial Advice:**

The Strategic Finance and Resource Management Team has been consulted on this proposal.

✓

**Legal Advice:**

The MPS legal team has been consulted on the proposal.

✓

**Equalities Advice:**

Equality and diversity issues are covered in the body of the report.

✓

**GDPR/Data Privacy**

GDPR compliance issues are covered in the body of the report

✓

**Director/Head of Service:**

The MOPAC Chief Finance Officer and Director of Corporate Services has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the MOPAC's plans and priorities.

✓

**Chief Executive Officer**

I have been consulted about the proposal and confirm that financial, legal and equalities advice has been taken into account in the preparation of this report. I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime.

Signature



Date 18/03/2021



Project Alpha Social Media Hub Continued Home Office Funding  
(Financial Year 21021/2022)

**MOPAC Investment Advisory & Monitoring meeting 5th March 2021**

**Report by DSU Mike West on behalf of the Chief of Corporate Services**

**Part 1 – This section of the report will be published by MOPAC. It is classified as OFFICIAL – PUBLIC**

*EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

The purpose of this document is to seek approval to enter into further grant agreement with the Home Office to provide an additional twelve months funding for the MPS hosted; NPCC sponsored Project Alpha Social Media Hub.

The Home Office have agreed to a grant agreement of £1,968,676.24 to fund the existing project for the 2021/2022 financial year.

This represents third year Home Office funding with the previous two years approved by MOPAC under PCD references 545 (19/20 grant), 867 and 914 (20/21 grant and variation).

This funding will allow the Hub to continue to deliver an enhanced response to tackle gang related serious violence and organised criminality that includes county line offending by taking action against online activity. Focusing on investigation, enforcement and disruption work against high harm gangs utilising a range of tactics. Additionally, making referrals to social media companies for the removal of illegal and harmful content intended to incite serious violence. DAC Graham McNulty retains oversight as the NPCC Gangs Portfolio lead.

The core aims of the Hub are:

- Deliver a strategy to tackle the growing issue of threat, risk and harm generated by gangs through their use of social media platforms that perpetuates serious youth violence and facilitates organised crime.
- Develop best practice in partnership with other Police Forces, agencies and the industry to enhance the response of law enforcement. Advancing skills, knowledge and the use of technology to deliver innovative and effective solutions.
- Gauge the scale of the threat and associated demand on law enforcement. Allow for analysis of gang network exploitation – e.g. recruitment into county lines, child criminal and sexual exploitation.
- Continued development of a national intelligence network, which would

be the UK's first dedicated intelligence function designed to tackle gang criminality and the associated violence.
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### **Recommendations**

The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, via the Investment Advisory and Monitoring meeting (IAM), is asked to approve:

- 1. To approve a grant agreement for a maximum of £1,968,676.24 from the Home Office to fund the Social Media Hub in the 2021/2022 financial year. Funding will reflect actual expenditure incurred during current financial year.**
- 2. The continuation of Project Alpha Social Media Hub with existing staff levels to address the threat, risk and harm of gang violence and organised crime perpetuated through online activity.**

### **Time sensitivity**

A decision is required from the Deputy Mayor by 19<sup>th</sup> March 2021. In accordance with the decision timetable. This is to allow continued operational delivery for FY 21/22 to achieve desired outcomes.

### **Non-confidential facts and advice to the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime**

### **Introduction and background**

1. As traditional communication data fragments with the introduction of new technology and communication providers, Social Media is becoming an ever-increasing key element within serious gang related violence and organised criminality that includes County Lines. This is relevant throughout London and across the UK.
2. With the proliferation of social media as a method of communication, there is a clear business need to develop new solutions to meet increasing demands.
3. The scale of the current complex risks posed by gangs in relation to the exposure of young people and the vulnerable to violence, criminal and sexual exploitation is extensive and affects every police force area.
4. The need for increased collaboration within law enforcement and with industry providers to deliver a better understanding of scale and risks and develop solutions collaboratively.
5. The Social Media Hub has operated during the current financial year with Home Office funding.

### **Issues for consideration**

Further Home Office funding for the continuation of Project Alpha - Social Media Hub as an innovative and dedicated capability with demonstrated success in tackling serious gang violence and organised criminality over the previous 2 years. The Hub maintains the support of DAC Graham McNulty at the NPCC gangs lead.

### **Contributes to the MOPAC Police & Crime Plan 2017-2021<sup>1</sup>**

The work the Hub will undertake directly impacts upon serious violent crime and the criminality of urban street gangs/Organised Crime Groups. It will also seek to reduce the criminal and sexual exploitation of young people.

### **Financial, Commercial and Procurement Comments**

In January 2021, the Home Office agreed to a grant agreement for £1,968,676.24 to fund Project Alpha for the 2021/2022 financial year (third year of funding). Allowing the Hub to continue operating with twenty two officers and deliver 24/7 cover. Funding will reflect actual expenditure incurred during 12 month period.

Following ongoing consultation with the Home Office Serious Violence Unit, it is anticipate funding to support the project will continue beyond 2021/2022. Funding for the Hub was included within the Home Office three-year funding review. The review has been reduced to twelve months due to the impact of the COVID pandemic.

The conditions on which the Home Office has made this grant relate to direct pay costs with the addition of overtime, plus training and equipment specific to the role. MPS support costs are not included. The previous accepted funding for the Hub in year one and year two (2019/2020 and 2020/2021 respectively) has been on this basis.

The funding will be recovered through the submission of a quarterly return to the Home Office in accordance with existing terms and conditions outlined in the existing Grant Agreement in place to fund Project Alpha.

The grant agreement for the project sets out the aims and objectives, governance, compliance (legal and strategic), strategic oversight and dissemination of relevant material, insurance and liabilities, HR and financial agreements and written with legal oversight.

At the end of the existing funding period and if no further funding is made available, there will be a phased exit strategy for staff to transition back into existing MPS posts.

A full breakdown of the costs is contained within restricted section of the report.

### **Legal Comments**

The legal powers applicable to:

- a. the acceptance of the Home Office Grant will be under Schedule 3, Paragraph 7 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 which provides that,

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<sup>1</sup> [Police and crime plan: a safer city for all Londoners | London City Hall](#)

7(1) The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime may do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the exercise of the functions of the Office.

(2) That includes—

- (a) entering into contracts and other agreements (whether legally binding or not);
- b. the making of this Grant will be under the powers conferred on the Home Office by Section 56 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004)

This request for approval is consistent with Paragraph 4.8 of the MOPAC Scheme of Consent and Delegation which provides the DMPC with delegated power to approve all offers made of grant funding

There are no legal reasons as to why this grant, the terms of which are set out within the main grant agreement, cannot be accepted.

Any Grant Agreement formalized will be substantially in the form of the existing Grant Agreement and will be published pursuant to Articles 3, 4 & 5 of The Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified Information) (Amendments) Order 2012.

### **Equality Comments**

This business case has undergone a full Equalities Impact Assessment. Due regard has been taken to the Equality Act's Public Sector Equality Duty under Sec 149 of the Equality Act 2010. Consideration has been taken to assess equality impact caused by the proposed business change including effective engagement and analysing relevant equality information. As a result, no negative impact has been identified to any individual at this stage.

### **Privacy Comments**

The MPS is subject to the requirements and conditions placed on it as a 'State' body to comply with the European Convention of Human Rights and the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018. Both legislative requirements place an obligation on the MPS to process personal data fairly and lawfully in order to safeguard the rights and freedoms of individuals.

Under Article 35 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Section 57 of the DPA 2018, Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) become mandatory for organisations with technologies and processes that are likely to result in a high risk to the rights of the data subjects.

Data Protection Impact Assessment completed. The project will ensure a privacy by design approach, which will allow the MPS to find and fix problems at the early stages of any project, ensuring compliance with GDPR. DPIAs support the accountability principle, as they will ensure the MPS complies with the requirements of GDPR and they demonstrate that appropriate measures have been taken to ensure compliance. The DPIA concluded the risk of a data breach occurring was LOW based on current practices. Recommendations regarding data storage and retention have been followed with the use of the MPS approved BOX data storage solution and an updated data retention policy.



### **Real Estate Implications**

The increased team of officers will remain in existing office space provided in year one within the MPS estate. The proposal does not increase current desk allocation due to the introduction of new shifts and agile working. Further information is contained within the restricted section of the report.

### **Environmental Implications**

There are no identifiable benefits to the London Environment Strategy

### **Background/supporting papers**

This information is contained in the restricted section of the report

Report author: **Mike West, Det Supt, work number 07785 518789**

### **Part 2 – This section refers to the details of the Part 2 business case which is NOT SUITABLE for MOPAC Publication.**

The Government Security Classification marking for Part 2 is:  
OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE [OPERATIONAL]

Part 2 of MPS Project Alpha Social Media Hub is exempt from publication for the following reasons:

FOIA Sec 31 Law enforcement

(1) Information which is not exempt information by virtue of section 30 is exempt information if its disclosure under this Act would, or would be likely to, prejudice—

- (a) The prevention or detection of crime,
- (b) The apprehension or prosecution of offenders,
- (c) The administration of justice,

The paper will be exempt until 01/04/2025 in accordance with MPS policy pending review.