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Convener, Justice Sub-Committee on Policing
c/o Justice Sub-Committee Clerks
Room T2.60
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

— 7th May 2019

Dear John

Police Scotland Brexit preparations

Thank you for your letter of 27 February regarding the financial impact of Police Scotland's preparations to deal with the potential impact of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union. I apologise for the delay in responding, but as you will appreciate, the overall situation in respect of EU exit has been very fluid.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Fair Work and the Economy and I wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in February outlining that any costs related to EU exit should not impact on Scotland's public finances, and should be met by the UK Government in full. In this letter, we highlighted that Scotland has exceptional requirements in relation to our distinct culture and geography, and separate constitutional and legal arrangements, and that the Brexit funds that the Scottish Government has so far been allocated fail to recognise these needs.

The response from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury that we received in March failed to recognise the unique circumstances that exist in Scotland or offer additional funding beyond the limited Brexit consequentials that have been provided to date, which are significantly short of the Scottish population share of the funding that the UK Government has so far provided to the Scottish Government.

As the Committee is aware, due to protracted uncertainty regarding UK exit from the EU, the Chief Constable took the decision not to initiate the planned reduction of the service by 300 officers and to recruit an additional 95 officers, who joined in February 2019. The annualised cost of these officers is around £17 million in 2019-20, together with capital costs associated with uniforms, equipment and vehicles, which are estimated to be around £0.8 million.

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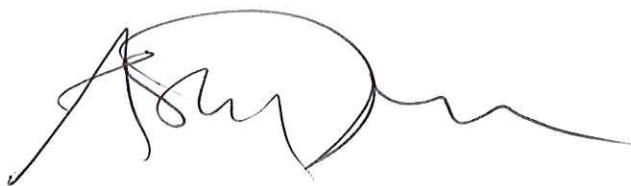
In March, Police Scotland put a National Reserve comprising 360 officers on standby to deal with any incidents that may arise from EU exit, such as disruption at ports and protests. The Scottish Government welcomed this as a prudent, sensible approach to contingency planning to ensure Police Scotland remained best-placed to keep people safe.

On 17 April, DCC Will Kerr wrote to the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) outlining that the officers who had been stood up for EU exit would be stood down from mid-May in light of the decision to delay the UK's exit from the EU. In this letter, DCC Kerr highlights that there have been significant benefits from the stand-up of the National Reserve and associated Multi-Agency Co-ordination Centre both in terms of operational deployments (and therefore the safety of citizens across Scotland) and testing the multi-agency co-ordination arrangements with partners.

The letter sets out the costs of the 360 officers already incurred (£1,270,877) and outlines that costs will continue to rise for the foreseeable future as the Chief Constable has made the decision to increase recruitment during the first half of 2019 based on an assessment of risks in the 'reasonable worst case scenario'.

The letter also outlines that the Chief Constable has directed Police Scotland to re-assess its projected recruitment profile for the remainder of the financial year to take into account both his statutory duties to the citizens of Scotland, and his broader responsibilities to manage Police Scotland's budget deficit. The Scottish Government welcomes the Chief Constable's commitments in this area and will continue to work closely with the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland to support the financial planning required to move towards a balanced budget position after the EU exit pressure abates.

Although the extension of Article 50 to 31 October has stopped the clock for the time being, the overall position in relation to EU exit is one of considerable uncertainty. Where additional policing costs have been incurred wholly due to EU exit-related preparations, we have committed to ensuring that these costs are met. In parallel, we will continue to pursue the costs of EU exit with the UK Government.



ASH DENHAM