



Police & Crime Commissioner for Cleveland
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The Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Home Secretary
House of Commons
London
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19 July 2013

Dear Home Secretary,

Firearms Licensing Fees

As the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland, I am aware that the Home Office is currently undertaking a review of firearms licensing fees as per Section 43 of the 1968 Firearms Act. This states that firearms licensing fees are set at a level intended to cover the costs of administering the certification and registration procedures for each license issued. At £50 this is plainly not the case.

I feel it appropriate to raise my observations and concerns in relation to this matter as I have been informed the fees have not been reviewed since 2000. The consequences of not reviewing costs are illustrated in the table below outlining the budget of the Firearms Licensing Unit within Cleveland Police. An annual subsidy is required to support firearms licensing as shown below.

	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14 Estimated
Unit Budget	£126,594	£127,072	£122,858	£121,503	£121,000
Revenue	£24,046	£40,913	£40,517	£34,124	£25,000
Total Cost	£102,548	£86,159	£82,341	£87,079	£96,000

I have been informed that national changes are being made to the way in which individuals can apply for licenses with this being fully embedded across all Forces by 2015. Within this context I would suggest that the Home Office review of the current licensing arrangement simply devolves the setting of fees to PCCs. I can see no good reason why fees need to be set nationally – they should reflect whatever the costs are locally.

In addition I feel the national review offers an opportunity for the Home Office to resolve a number of anomalies that have been identified in the licensing/ renewal process. As an example, if an application for a grant or renewal is refused the application fee originally paid is returned to the applicant with no reimbursement for the time/resources used to process the application. This obviously does not take into account the resources used to get to the stage of refusal.

A second example is the cost of Doctors fees being met by the Police and not the applicant.

I'm sure you fully appreciate in this time of austerity that close scrutiny of organisational finances are key to sustainability of services. The force is required to make savings in the current and foreseeable financial year/s. I feel the correction of license costings to adhere to the initial legislative requirements of being cost neutral is a small but not insignificant step towards this. In Cleveland the nationally set fee in effect costs two police officers; the change proposed would therefore put two more officers on the beat at no cost to the general tax payer.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Coppinger', written in a cursive style.

Barry Coppinger
Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland