

FOOTBALL INTELLIGENCE UNIT PROJECT**Joint Report of the Chief Constable, Clerk and Treasurer**

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform members of a successful bid for funding available from the Home Office to support the provision of a Football Intelligence Unit.

2 BACKGROUND

Northumbria Police has three senior football clubs, Newcastle United, Sunderland FC and Berwick Rangers. The two large clubs, namely Newcastle and Sunderland, have a number of individuals and/or groups who indulge in violent behaviour and pose a threat both domestically and possibly internationally in their 'support' of the England international team.

The Football (Disorder) Act 2000 provides legislation under English Law for Police Forces to pursue Football Banning Orders, by way of complaint under Section 14b of the Act. However, by following the civil process, obtaining these banning orders often proves time consuming, expensive and resource intensive.

The European Football Championships are scheduled to take place in Portugal, during the summer of 2004. Therefore, the Government has provided funding to facilitate the proactive targeting of suspected football 'hooligans', in an effort to prevent them from travelling to Portugal. Police Forces were invited to bid for funding to support this initiative.

Northumbria Police has secured funding of £223,000, to support this initiative. The funding will enable the establishment of a dedicated Football Intelligence Unit within the Force Intelligence Bureau. The Unit will be staffed by a sergeant and two constables and will provide the facility to focus upon organised football related violence/disorder, increase intelligence flow, target organised crime groups and football related 'prominents' and investigate those suspected of being involved in such activity.

The Unit will also proactively pursue Banning Orders through the Football (Disorder) Act 2000 and in doing so, liaise with Criminal Justice partners.

The full cost of this Unit, including the staff and equipment costs, will be met by the funding. However, a target of 40 Banning Orders has been agreed, based on the arrest and disorder record of both Newcastle and Sunderland Football fans. This target is considered realistic, however should the target not be achieved, the funds will remain available, provided Northumbria Police can demonstrate what actions has been taken in its attempt to achieve this target.

The Project will cease after the European Championships 2004.

3 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

Nil

4 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

Although there are no direct human rights implications arising from this report, the formation of this Unit will have human rights implications in that the work of the officers attached to this Unit may be said to promote the ‘right to life’, and the ‘right to respect for private and family life’.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Treasurer confirms that the costs arising from this project can be met from the agreed funding and there are no other financial implications arising from this report.

6 RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.