

Meeting 23/03/2017 Lincolnshire Police and Shooters of Lincolnshire

Minutes:

Attending:

Marc Jones	Police and Crime Commissioner
Pete Shaw	Detective Inspector
Ben Elton	Fire Arms Officer, Decision Maker with Lincolnshire Police
Charlie Blow	Chairman Lincolnshire Small Bore Rifle Association

Abbreviations

LP	Lincolnshire Police
FAL	firearms license
PCC	Police & Crime Commissioner
CC	Chief Constable
SofL	Shooters of Lincolnshire
BE	Ben Elton
FEOs	Fire Arms Enquiry Officer

Fire Arms Licensing – Resources, measures taken

LP recognises that the move to G4S resulted in poor performance for FAL, they are serving 20,000 shooters in the county, and current database systems are inadequate.

Pete Shaw will oversee the FAL, bringing it under direct control and management of Lincs Police

There is development of a digital solution to manage FAL and assist in self management of FAL.

LP has invested in the new system which is expected to be operational within weeks. Home Office also have interest in this new digital platform.

Additional concerns re data hacking – the new digital system will only record part details and embody encryption to minimise risks of cyber crime.

Questions

Is it satisfactory to leave gun cabinet keys/combination numbers with solicitors pending the event of death?

Yes – but LP may have to access cabinets pre availability of keys/combinations from solicitors depending on risk factors associated with individual cases.

What forms of advertising can a club legally carry out?

There are no specific laws regarding club advertising, either where you advertise or what events/disciplines you advertise. Contact BE for assistance, advice and review of your advertisements

There are however guidelines: Firearms/sporting firearms can not be portrayed as a life style, image statement or accessory

NB: SofL raised the point that the difference between the term 'firearm' and 'weapon' is of key importance in how clubs and individuals portray themselves and the sport.

How does a club attract new members, when new members have to be known to the club before hand?

This is not a definite law. New members should go through a probationary period and be known to a club member before bringing them along to the club. It is the responsibility of each club to have a proper probationary period before accepting a person as a new club member and all new club members should be selected by club officials.

There should be a period of monitory and mentoring. Police should be informed of new members with the promotion of two way communication. Clubs should feed back any unacceptable behaviour or suspicions of risk/inappropriateness or concerns to the Decision Maker at LP. The police will revoke certificates of those persons deemed unfit to hold a FAL.

LP will ensure through two way communication to respond to new member referrals regarding contentious information.

Why is FAL taking so long?

FAL involves the organisation of differing priorities.

- 1 the right people suitable to grant FAL
- 2 speed and quality of service provision.

LP has financially invested to address delay issues:

- A new inspector in charge has been appointed
- New IT portal being designed and build
- Additional processing staff in place

LP expects to see the benefits of these measures within a year.

It was commented that other counties/forces have a very speedy turn around in the issuing of FAL? PCC noted that in order to make meaningful comparisons services and service providers need to be 'like for like', and suggested that some of the short turn around figures may be 'massaged'. PCC commented that LP is an ethical force.

It was commented that some people are left without a FAC for up to six months during the referral process. PCC responded that £250,000 has been invested in improvements and reiterated that staff have been appointed. Any problems with FAL should be referred to the Decision Makers.

It was commented in response to the above that on contacting LP regarding FAL, calls are put through to G4S administration teams, causing difficulties for people in getting resolutions to any issues they have. PCC responded that there is an administrative procedure in communication to follow and that the Decision Maker should, ideally be the last port of call in resolving issues. (NB: this seems contradictory to previous statement). PCC recognised that the communication system is poor and will be looked into.

In relation to delays in FAL it was commented that whilst without an FAL, storage of firearms with firearms dealers is difficult to obtain and expensive. LP in response noted that provided a person has submitted their FAL renewal in a timely manner a temporary permit should be issued in the case of delays. If you miss your deadline or application is submitted late then storage of firearms is the applicant responsibility.

It was commented that G4S were unable to differentiate between a timely application and a late. LP response – that priority of issue for FAC has now moved to those submitting in a timely manner.

Home Office propose an increase in the cost of FAL, an increase which is out of proportion with inflation.

LP noted that current fees cover 50% of costs. LP recommends that shooters contact their MPs and the Home Office.

Could a club have a long barrelled pistol added to their license to promote as many firearms disciplines as possible?

No, cover cannot be extended for this type of firearm.

What advice could LP give if a member of a club is suspected of having a 'personality disorder'?

This is a communication issue. Clubs have an obligation to report any member of a club to LP if they have concerns over that person. It would be appropriate for the club secretary to report any issues.

It is also possible to 'raise awareness without action'. LP can be informed in confidence, where information will not be disclosed. An individual can be monitored without being compromised.

LP need to be informed if there is any element of risk to public safety, LP will evoke an FAL.

'Solitaire' was mentioned – this is overarching, its aim to prevent firearms falling into the possession of criminals or for terrorist purposes.

How would a club secretary know if a license has been revoked?

Only through communication with LP.

It was suggested by SofL that a liaison officer could be utilised; their primary role to attend clubs and report to police, this could be overt or discreet. Pete Shaw who sits on the force network will look into this.

It was commented on a recent incident, where a Shooting club ground had been raided. LP noted that it was a 'rural crime'. There is now increased focus on rural community safety awareness, with members of the rural crime network.

GP reports – do LP wait until they have either had a positive or negative report from GP before they will action a FAL and how long do they wait?

Home Office advice is that if forces have not heard from GPs within 21 days they may proceed with issue of FAL.

LP PCC 'feels uncomfortable with the issue of FAL without response from GPs'. It makes the issue of FAL a 'more risky business' and therefore GPs should produce the reports appropriately. If a GP feels unable to proceed with a report, for example, they may be a conscientious objector, then they have a duty to pass the patient onto another GP.

Who is responsible to chase GPs?

It is the responsibility of the applicant. LP would be able to advise if a GP need chasing.

NB: For persons with personality disorders it would be the responsibility of LP to request additional medical reports.

What is the likely hood of the British Government enforcing FAL for airguns as is the case in Scotland?

Scotland has a greater risk/rate of miss use or poor behaviour with the use of airguns and has responded accordingly. England does not currently deem a sufficient risk and therefore it is unlikely that this type of regulation might be enforced any time soon

For annual county sporting days a section 11 has to be requested each year for the same area. Would it not be possible to be able to request a section 11 that will cover a period of years to same time and resources?

LP will look at this for review.

Would it be possible for home visits to be arranged in the evening? Home visits are now during daytime hours and make it difficult to organise around working hours?

Scheduled appointments are difficult and it is appreciated that a better organisation of visits is required, which may make room for improved flexibility. LP will however have to stick to processes and working time scales due to financial constraints. The new IT system should help speed up the visiting process.

Can we have a direct link between club officials and Decision Makers?

Plans are in process with the nomination of FEOs for clubs.

One of the aims of the LP is to be able to set up FAQs on the LP website.