

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

29 January 2019

PRESS NOTICE

Progress made but evidence hearings postponed – Sir John Mitting

The evidence hearings for the Undercover Policing Inquiry have today been postponed so that the Inquiry can better get to the truth of undercover policing.

This is ahead of a hearing looking at how to deal with issue of individuals' privacy contained in evidence documents.

Set up in 2015 due to serious and widespread concerns about undercover policing, the Inquiry had been set to hold its first evidence hearings in June 2019.

However a number of issues such as discovering the documents were significantly more complex than forecast and the difficulties presented by issues such as privacy and data protection have led to a fresh look at the timelines.

As a result, in a [statement published today](#), Sir John Mitting, Chair of the Undercover Policing Inquiry, confirmed that hearings would now not start before 2020.

Sir John Mitting said:

“Postponement of the start date is regrettable, but is necessary if the Inquiry is to fulfil its two principal objectives: to get to the truth about the past and make worthwhile recommendations for the future.”

Privacy hearing has major impact

This week, the Inquiry is holding a hearing on how to deal with issue of individuals' privacy contained in evidence documents.

This issue is complex and whatever the outcome, will have a significant impact on how the Inquiry proceeds as well as the future timetable.

To better inform those in attendance an [updated Counsel note](#) has today been published by the Inquiry.

Hearings moved to better get to the truth

The Inquiry's Strategic Review published in May 2017 set out an ambitious timetable for the Inquiry. Progress in the Inquiry so far includes:

- 163 Special Demonstration Squad officers gone through the anonymity process
- 39 National Public Order Intelligence Unit officers gone through the anonymity process
- received the first witness statements
- the Chair meeting with all core participants who wished to
- introducing policies and processes around how to deal with sensitive issues like the:
 - balance of proof required

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- the legal principles behind restriction orders
- determining the approach to spent conviction and changes needed to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- securing an undertaking secured from the Attorney General which means that witnesses can give full and frank evidence to the Inquiry knowing that their evidence cannot be used against them in criminal proceedings.
- bespoke IT systems procured to analyse huge volumes of secret material efficiently

However, sifting through a vast quantity of complex documents, making necessary decisions on anonymity, and commissioning witness statements to paint a picture of what really happened takes time.

As a result, the hearings will be unlikely to start before 2020. All those required to take part as a witness will be notified six months prior to commencement.

Background

The purpose of the Undercover Policing Inquiry is to investigate and report on undercover police operations conducted by English and Welsh police forces in England and Wales since 1968.

The Inquiry will examine the contribution undercover policing has made to tackling crime, how it was and is supervised and regulated, and its effect on individuals involved – both police officers and others who came into contact with them.

The work of the Inquiry ranges across the full scope of undercover policing work and will look at the work of the Special Demonstration Squad, the National Public Order Intelligence Unit and police forces in England and Wales. The Inquiry will also examine whether people may have been wrongly convicted in cases involving undercover police officers, and refer any such cases to a separate panel for consideration.

The Inquiry's investigations are broken down into modules. The descriptions of modules Two and Three have been amended to spell out more clearly the Inquiry's investigative intentions.

One

Examination of the deployment of undercover officers in the past, their conduct, and the impact of their activities on themselves and others.

Two

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Examination of the management and oversight of undercover officers, including their selection, training, supervision, care after the end of an undercover deployment and the legal and regulatory framework within which undercover policing is carried out. Module Two (a) will involve managers and administrators from within undercover policing units. Module Two (b) will involve senior managers higher in the chain of command as well as police personnel who handled intelligence provided by undercover police officers. Module Two (c) will involve a number of other government bodies with a connection to undercover policing, including the Home Office.

Three

Examination of current undercover policing practices and of how undercover policing should be conducted in future.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Undercover Policing Inquiry is constituted under the [Inquiries Act 2005](#)ⁱ.
2. The Inquiry's [terms of reference](#)ⁱⁱ were announced by the Home Secretary on 16 July 2015.
3. The Inquiry's [Strategic Review](#)ⁱⁱⁱ was published in May 2018.
4. The Inquiry's [Frequently Asked Questions](#)^{iv} document provides more information on the Inquiry more generally, as do its [published update notes](#)^v.
5. The Inquiry's website is www.ucpi.org.uk and the Inquiry can be found on Twitter @ucpinquiry.

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ⁱ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/12/pdfs/ukpga_20050012_en.pdf

ⁱⁱ <http://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-announces-terms-of-reference-for-undercover-policing-inquiry>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/20180510-strategic_review.pdf

^{iv} <https://www.ucpi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/20171031-FAQs.pdf>

^v <https://www.ucpi.org.uk/communications/>