

to or through the charity at this time. That was not unusual in itself. No grant approval and grant management files, including approval submissions to Ministers have been retained in relation to the detail underpinning any such individual awards through the period. We were told that such files were subject to a six-year destruction deadline. However, there was a significant financial relationship with the charity named by Mr Hulbert throughout the life of the VSU. A memorandum dated April 1976 lists, without any underpinning detail, significant annual payments to the charity in question for each of the three years 1974/75 to 1976/77 which are not picked up in the Hansard schedule of VSU grants for the first two of these years [records for the third year are missing]. This led us to conclude that the picture of VSU funding laid out in the annex to the original review is not complete. We have not been able to substantiate what further VSU funding during the years up to the early 1980s existed beyond the Hansard records, making it impossible to dismiss completely the suggestion being made that a payment to PIE was facilitated within/concealed within a wider grant award. Nor, we are told, does the larger charity itself have detailed published records of financial accounts for the years in question against which we could compare the grant sums leaving the VSU [even if these could be found].

12. The only material that directly supports the existence of such a payment currently comes from Mr Hulbert who recollects that may only have been done on behalf of those investigating PIE, not as a way of the HO, or someone within the HO exceeding their authority, providing financial assistance for PIE because either supported it aims.

6. Whether the conclusions of the reviews were and remain appropriate:

With regard to Review 1 we made inquiries elsewhere to test the findings and the conclusions drawn. We are of the opinion that the conclusions were reasonably available to the Reviewer on the information then available.

We agree with the recommendations made in Review 1. We understand the Home Office has accepted them and they have been implemented.

We have added to those recommendations.

Review 2 concluded that on the balance of probabilities, the alleged funding of PIE did not take place. While this represents the judgement of the original reviewer it is not a fully satisfactory answer to whether the Home Office ever directly or indirectly funded PIE. We cannot offer categorical assurance one way or the other. It is possible that a Special Branch inspired payment might have taken place - the official records offer no direct evidence to suggest it did, and no other civil servant we have had contact with has corroborated Mr Hulbert's memory, but the records are insufficiently complete to rule it out entirely.

7. Also re how police handled material that was handed to them:

Review 1 considered how the police handled some specific material that was handed to them [Chapter 7]. We saw no information to contradict those conclusions.

As there was no system for recording what information the Home Office sent to the police it is not possible for us to opine further, however we have recommended that there should be a system of recording what was sent to the police and what the result of that reference was [Recommendation 3].