

Minutes

Minutes of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel Complaints Sub-Committee held on Friday 11 January 2013, in Teleconference, commencing at 3.00 pm and concluding at 3.22 pm.

Members Present

Councillor Mark Booty (West Oxfordshire District Council), Terry Burke (Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel), Councillor Jesse Grey (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead), Councillor Iain McCracken (Bracknell Forest Council) and Pam Pearce (Aylesbury Vale District Council)

Officers Present

Reece Bowman and Clare Gray

1. Election of Chairman

RESOLVED

That Mr T Burke be elected Chairman of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel Complaints Sub-Committee for the ensuing year.

2. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED

That the press and public be excluded for the following item which is exempt by virtue of Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 because it contains information relating to an individual

5. Non-Criminal Complaints against the PCC

This was the first meeting of the Complaints Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee had received a copy of the Scrutiny Officer's report. The Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel must handle non-criminal complaints against the Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley; this is a statutory role. Initial complaint handling, recording and various other statutory duties of the Police & Crime Panel were delegated to the Chief Executive of the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley (OPCC) at the 6 December 2012 meeting of the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel.

The report containing these delegations also recommended that a Complaints Sub-Committee of the Panel be formed to handle the informal resolution, on behalf of the Panel, of complaints received directly or referred by the OPCC. A complaint handling procedure for the Panel was also proposed in the report and was adopted at the 6 December 2012 meeting.

Two non-criminal complaints against the PCC for Thames Valley have been referred to the Panel Secretariat by the OPCC; for each, a report has been compiled in accordance with the Panel's complaint handling procedure. The procedure also required the Panel's Scrutiny Officer to secure statements to the Sub-Committee by the respective complainants and the person subject to the complaints (the PCC). These statements were included in the Scrutiny Officer's reports.

The Sub-Committee agreed that in general it was not considered in the public interest to publish these reports.

Complaint One (JS)

The Sub-Committee considered the report submitted by the Scrutiny Officer in relation to Complaint One:-

- A Member commented that rather than send an apology a letter of explanation should be sent to the complainant. There was not sufficient weight to the complaint to offer an apology. Members agreed with this point.
- The documents pre-dated the existence of the Complaints Sub-Committee and the Clerk acknowledged the complaint the day after the complaint was received. As the OPCC had been newly elected it was not unreasonable to expect some 'snagging' at the start, especially as he was setting up his new office and it was a transitional period.
- The Sub-Committee agreed that it would not be reasonable or appropriate for everyone who had received the email to respond individually to the email. There should be a single point of contact who should be the Scrutiny Officer.
- A complainant could reasonably expect a response in 7 days if they were not able to access information about the procedure. The complainant stated that information on the OPCC's complaints procedure was, at the time, not available on the OPCC's web page.
- The OPCC website should be easy to navigate and Complaints Process should be written in plain English with clear response deadlines.

The Complaints Sub-Committee agreed that there was no case to answer and that the complaint should not be upheld but that a letter of explanation regarding the process should be sent to the complainant.

Complaint Two (SP)

The Sub-Committee considered the report submitted by the Scrutiny Officer in relation to Complaint Two:-

- Whilst an apology was required there was no-one at fault.
- It was important that there was only one email address for members of the public that wish to contact the PCC.
- There had been an oversight due to the recent creation of the PCC role which has now been resolved.
- The OPCC Chief Executive has offered to send the complainant an unreserved apology.
- A holding email should ideally have been sent.

The Complaints Sub-Committee agreed that the complaint should be upheld and an apology given. A recommendation from the Sub-Committee should be that the PCC should maintain only a single email address for use by the public.

Members of the Sub-Committee agreed to give delegated authority to the Chairman to finalise the process.

The Sub-Committee agreed that they did not need to re-convene.

RESOLVED (Unanimously)

- 1. That the Chairman of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel Complaints Sub-Committee be given delegated authority to finalise the report/record of the outcome, in consultation with the Scrutiny Officer which will be sent to the complainants and the PCC.**
- 2. That the Chairman be the authorised individual who would determine whether these matters had been resolved satisfactorily.**
- 3. The Sub-Committee agreed that in general it was not considered in the public interest to publish these reports.**
- 4 That Complaint One should not be upheld but that a letter of explanation should be sent to the complainant.**
- 5 That Complaint Two should be upheld with the following actions:-**
 - a. That the Sub-Committee give its endorsement to the issuance of an apology to the complainant from the OPCC Chief Executive.**
 - b. That it be recommended to the Police and Crime Commissioner that there should be only a single email address for members of the public that wish to contact him.**

CHAIRMAN