

Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel Procedure for Handling Non-Criminal Complaints against the PCC

- When the decision has been made to record a complaint that will not subsequently be referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (the IPCC), the Chief Executive of the Office of the PCC will:
 - refer the record, and copies of all the associated paperwork, to the Panel's scrutiny officer. This will be no later than two working days after the complaint has been recorded.
- On receipt of the complaint, the Panel's scrutiny officer will:
 - convene a meeting of the Complaints Sub-Committee, normally to be held within three weeks of the referral of the complaint,
 - write to the complainant, setting out timescales and providing details about the informal resolution procedure; and giving the complainant an opportunity to make further comments in support of his/her complaint (allowing him/her two weeks to respond). Where the Panel's scrutiny officer believes that the circumstances of the case are such that the Complaints Sub-Committee may decide to treat the complaint as having been resolved, he/she will ask the complainant to provide his/her representations in this regard for the Complaints Sub-Committee to take into account; and
 - write to the person complained about, setting out timescales and providing details about the informal resolution procedure; and giving him/her an opportunity to make comments in response to the complaint (allowing him/her two weeks to respond).
- The Panel's scrutiny officer will compile a brief report for the Complaints Sub-Committee, setting out the pertinent details of complaint, recording any failure by the person complained about to comment on the complaint and making suggestions for the next steps.
- The Complaints Sub-Committee will first consider whether the complaint has been satisfactorily dealt with and, subject to any representations by the complainant, may decide to treat the complaint as having been resolved. In such a case, the Complaints Sub-Committee's reasons will be recorded and notified to the parties.
- If, on considering the report, the Complaints Sub-Committee feels that the matter needs to be formally resolved, it will decide its course of action. In accordance with regulations, the Complaints Sub-Committee may not conduct an investigation. The Complaints Sub-Committee may exercise its delegated powers to require the person complained against to provide information or documents or attend before it to answer questions or give evidence, as this will not be regarded as an investigation. However, any other step intended to gather information about the complaint, other than inviting the comments of the complainant and the person complained against, will be likely to amount to investigation.
- The Complaints Sub-Committee will consider whether to devise an action plan (to be drawn up by the Panel's scrutiny officer) and in so doing will take into account any applicable guidance issued by the Secretary of State and may also consider any guidance issued by the IPCC pursuant to section 22 of the Police Reform Act 2002 on local resolution. Any such action plan will include an indicative timeframe.

- Any such action plan may include (for example):
 - An explanatory letter being written by an officer of the Panel (or on behalf of the Complaints Sub-Committee),
 - An explanatory letter being written by an officer of the OPCC,
 - A suggested change to OPCC policy; or
 - A request that an apology is tendered (no apology may be tendered on behalf of the person complained against unless that person has admitted the alleged conduct and agreed to the apology).
- The Complaints Sub-Committee will also decide whether it wishes to:
 - reconvene to take any steps identified in the action plan,
 - authorise any named individual (who may not be a PCC, a DPCC or the Chief Executive of the Office of the PCC) to take any steps in accordance with the action plan; or
 - refer the matter to the Panel recommending that the identified action be taken.
- Once the actions from the plan have been completed, the matter may be referred back to the Complaints Sub-Committee or an authorised individual may determine that the matter has been resolved. The Panel's scrutiny officer must make a record of the outcome of the informal resolution as soon as practicable, normally within three working days, after the process is completed and provide copies to the complainant and the person complained against. The matter will then be closed.
- No part of the record may be published by the Complaints Sub-Committee unless, having given the parties an opportunity to make representations about the proposed publication and having considered any such representations, the Complaints Sub-Committee considers that publication is in the public interest.
- The Panel's scrutiny officer will prepare update reports to the Panel about all complaints considered in the preceding quarter by the Complaints Sub-Committee, the action taken (including any obligations to act, or refrain from acting, that have arisen under the regulations, but have not yet been complied with or have been contravened) and the outcome of the process.
- If, at any stage, the IPCC informs the Panel that they require the complaint to be referred to them, or if the Complaints Sub-Committee decides that the complaint should be referred to the IPCC, the informal resolution process must be discontinued. The Complaints Sub-Committee should only decide that the complaint should be so referred if matters come to light during the informal resolution process which indicate the commission of a criminal offence, thus leading to the earlier decision as to whether or not the complaint was a serious complaint being reversed.
- At any stage, the Panel's scrutiny officer may seek legal advice from the Panel's legal adviser.