

AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

28th June 2022

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF

COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER AND COMPLAINT REVIEW UPDATE

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To provide members of Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel with oversight of all complaints made against Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner for scrutiny of the initial handling by the Chief of Staff Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner's Office.

BACKGROUND

2. Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel (the Panel) is the Appropriate Authority to handle complaints against the conduct of 'Relevant Office Holders', being Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) according to statutory regulations of the Elected Local Policing Bodies (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2012 and as referred to in the Police Reform and Social Responsibilities Act 2011, section 31 and schedule 7.
3. However, the initial handling, which includes categorisation, recording decision-making, referral of criminal allegations to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), disapplication decision-making, and responding to the complainant in the first instance, has been delegated by the Panel to the Chief of Staff in the Office of Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner, with scrutiny and oversight of all complaints and any escalation for informal resolution, remaining with the Panel.

SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

4. There have been two new complaints recorded against PCC Mark Shelford since the last meeting of the Police and Crime Panel.

Complaint number 78 was received by the OPCC on 17/04/22 and was resolved on 03/05/22 by means of explanation by the COS. The complaint was regarding lack of response to an online web form and investigations have shown that it was missed as a result of an administrative error.

Complaint number 79 was received by the OPCC on 25/04/22 and expressed dissatisfaction regarding the PCC's handling of a long standing and ongoing matter. It relates to a former complaint and was resolved by means of explanation and apology on 11/05/22 by the PCC when responding to the ongoing substantive matter.

5. There have been no new complaints against PCC Mark Shelford received via the IOPC.

6. All complaints to date have had Panel oversight, including those solely handled by the PCC's Interim Chief Executive/Chief of Staff.
7. All electronic complaint files are available at the PCC's office for viewing by the Panel, if requested. The document retention period is in accordance with the published Record Retention Policy and this is currently six years.

COMPLAINT REVIEW UPDATE

8. The complaint review process allows the PCC to independently scrutinise the outcome of complaints (upon application by an involved party). The process determines whether the complaint was handled lawfully and correctly.
9. The complaint and review manager has handled 430 reviews to date. 20% of all reviews have been upheld and 68% not upheld. The remaining 12% were either void, ineligible or out of time. Recently released IOPC data shows that ASP received the most review applications outside the five largest metropolitan forces. This is despite ASP being only the 16th largest force. This can be interpreted in different ways – as an indicator of initial complaint handling quality, or an indication of confidence in the PCC. High volumes of applications have resulted in difficulties for some forces, however our process remains efficient and cost effective with a turnaround of less than a month.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

10. There are no equality implications arising from the handling of complaints against Avon and Somerset PCC. The protected characteristics of complainants are not necessarily known, and all complaints are logged and published in an open and transparent manner.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Members are asked to review and comment on this complaints report and to advise of any recommendations or requests for informal resolution through the statutory process of escalating complaints against the PCC to the Panel.

Alice Ripley – Chief of Staff