



**Lancashire**  
**Constabulary**  
police and communities together

**REPORT TO: JOINT AUDIT AND ETHICS COMMITTEE**

**DATE: 11 SEPTEMBER 2017**

**REPORT AUTHOR: MEMBERS OF AUDIT & ETHICS COMMITTEE**

**SUBJECT: SCRUTINY OF COMPLAINT FILES – AUGUST 2017**

## **1 Issue for Consideration**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable Members of the Committee to comment at the meeting on the Constabulary's procedures for handling and investigating complaints in respect of files they have viewed.

## **2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 To receive a report on the scrutiny of complaints files and to consider reviewing the current protocol for the scrutiny of complaint files.

## **3 Background**

- 3.1 The Commissioner has requested that the Joint Audit and Ethics Committee undertake the scrutiny of complaints against police officers and police staff.
- 3.2 In the last quarter, Members of the Committee reviewed 16 files which were selected at random and comprised of a cross section of complaint type. The files can be analysed by type as follows:

<b>Complaint type</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
Local Resolution by Division	4	Resolved
Direction & Control	4	Not upheld
Full investigation by PSD	1	Not upheld
Full investigation by Division	1	Not upheld
Complaint withdrawn	1	Apparently withdrawn because the complainant did not provide full details, but the officer was given words of advice
Complaint Disapplied	1	
Appeal cases	2	Not upheld

In addition, a connected case was also reviewed, and a follow up review was carried out on a case from the last case scrutiny.

3.3 Generally the quality of the complaint process was found to be good and the reviewers were pleased to note that the process was transparent and all complainants received a full copy of the internal report. In most cases, there was positive engagement with the complainant and the matter was dealt with reasonably promptly. There were concerns that:

- In a couple of cases, written communication could have been better, and complainants appeared to have been a little alienated.
- one case involved significant delay (not concluded until 11 months after receipt) and was not correctly recorded on the system.

Due to annual leave and other pressures, PSD had not been able to respond the members comments before this report was written. A verbal update on their response will be provided at the meeting.

3.4 Members noted the demand being placed upon the complaints handling process arising from fracking and related protests and the fact that PSD has had to allocated specific resources to deal with this. All 4 of the Direction and Control complaints (which had bene selected at random) and the withdrawn case related to fracking issues.

3.5 PSD is continuing to develop new policies and procedures to enable to it to deal more effectively with the challenges which it faces and in preparation for the new legislation relating to complaints which will be implement in April 2018.

3.6 The new initiative focussing on service recovery (where appropriate), has been allocated to a specific role within PSD and this has increased its success. Complainants are given the choice of accepting this route, and, if they do so, their complaint is recorded as a "miscellaneous case" rather than a complaint. However, staff shortages have unfortunately impacted upon this role. Given that this is, overall a saving of resource, PSD are looking to restructure to ensure that this role is adequately resourced in future.

- 3.7 The new policy of dealing with persistent complainants referred to at the last meeting has begun to be implemented and has considerably reduced the demands on the PSD. The complainant now receives regular periodic updates, replacing the daily telephone contact which had been taking place.
- 3.8 Overall the Members did not have any issues of serious concern and were satisfied that the complaint handling process was being followed appropriately and in line with statutory and IPCC requirements.
- 3.9 The reviewers consider that, during the two years these reviews have been taking place, there have been significant improvements in the quality of communication with complainants and the timeliness of dealing with complaints. New processes are being developed for implementation in April 2018 and the reviewers propose that the scrutiny of complaints protocol be reviewed, and that consideration be given to:
- the nature of the scrutiny
  - the issues of concern
  - how those issues might be addressed by a quarterly case sample
  - the impact of the revised complaint processes upon the scrutiny process

## 4 Implications

<b>Financial:</b>	Resource requirements to enable development and implementation of the above can be found from existing budgets.
<b>Legal:</b>	
<b>Equality Impact Assessment:</b>	
<b>Risks and Impact:</b>	
<b>Link to Police and Crime Plan:</b>	

## 5 List of attachments / appendices

## 6 Background Papers

- None

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