

SUSSEX POLICE AUTHORITY – 29 JULY 2010

REPORT OF THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE

REPORT BY CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE

Introduction

- 1.1 This report informs the Police Authority on matters considered by the Professional Standards Committee (PSC) at its meeting on 7 July 2010. The meeting was attended by Prof G Bull (Chairman), Ms E Daniel, Mr G Daniel JP, Mr B Duncan, Mr A Smith and Dr R Walker.
- 1.2 The Committee considered a wide range of policing issues at the meeting including the following matters. The full agenda and reports for this Committee are available on the Authority's website, and the webcasting of the meeting can also be accessed via the website.

Inspection of Complaints Register

- 2.1 Following concerns raised by the Committee following the review of a complaint, which highlighted a CCTV blindspot in Crawley custody suite, the Committee were pleased to note that, as a direct result, the Crawley custody suite has had a new camera installed and another camera has been moved slightly to cover the area concerned from two angles. This reduces the risk of allegations of assault, protecting both detainees and employees.
- 2.2 At the Inspection of Complaints Register meeting held on 24 June 2010, the Members' looked at a number of files and discovered that the Policing Pledge to respond within 24 hours is not being adhered to. Since that meeting, the Home Secretary has removed the national requirement for a Policing Pledge and single confidence target, but the aspiration to respond in a timely and professional manner remains important to both the Committee and Sussex Police.
- 2.3 The Committee has requested a pilot be conducted on one division, where the issue of communication with complaints will be prioritised, to enable an analysis on the impact on complaints to be made.

Independent Police Complaints Commission

- 3.1 At its meeting in January 2010, the Professional Standards Committee expressed concern about the delays at the Independent Police Complaints Commission in dealing with appeals relating to Sussex Police.
- 3.2 The Authority wrote to the IPCC Commissioner for London and the South East, Mr Mike Franklin, to air our concerns. At the subsequent invitation of Mr Franklin, Prof G Bull and the Assistant Chief Executive met with the Commissioner on 26 May 2010. The number of appeals outstanding has since dropped by 50% (currently 18 appeals are outstanding). The IPCC now writes to people who appeal to inform them that a response will

take between 8 and 10 weeks, and makes it clear to complainants that the delays are with the IPCC, not Sussex Police.

- 3.3 The PSC acknowledged that the IPCC is doing its best to improve its processes and the Committee will continue to keep a watching brief on this issue and have agreed with Mr Franklin that the Chairman of PSC and the Assistant Chief Executive will meet with him regularly whenever he is visiting the Chief Constable. Mr Franklin also conceded that the Authority are an interested party in IPCC findings relating to Sussex investigations, and IPCC correspondence with Sussex Police will now be copied to the Authority via the Chief Executive. Ms E Daniel was appointed by the Committee to look in more detail at the issues relating to the above average number of appeals upheld by the IPCC to see if there are any lessons to be learned.

Complaints Against the Police

- 4.1 The Professional Standards Committee examined the statistics for the year 2009-10. The scheduled meetings of PSC will now be programmed to fit into the reporting periods for the Professional Standards Department (PSD), which will result in a more comprehensive set of statistics being available for discussion. The Committee has, for some time, been seeking to enhance performance management data and this move to align meetings with reporting periods is a simple yet effective way to do so.
- 4.2 The Committee requested details to ensure the question of ethnicity is addressed, and issues surrounding disability and mental health need to be monitored and a report provided to the PSC. The Committee feels it should do more to make sure relevant information is completed on the forms.
- 4.3 The Committee has been concerned for some time about how vexatious complaints are dealt with. The Committee asked Dr R Walker and Ms E Daniel to undertake a short scrutiny review with PSD to explore how best to resolve long-standing complaints as it remains concerned about the amount of effort invested by Sussex Police in dealing with these complaints. The PSC will look into this issue at a Members' seminar at a future PSC. PSC will also look into the relationship between this type of complaint and mental health.

Complaints by Division/Department: Community and Justice Department

- 5.1 The Committee has recently enhanced its scrutiny of performance by requesting representation by departments. Superintendent Whitfield gave an oral presentation on complaints received in the Community and Justice Department. The Committee heard that communication with complainants after they have left custody is difficult; therefore the opportunity to explore complaints in detail and thereby ensuring maximum learning is realised, is often lost.
- 5.2 The Committee was concerned that the custody department is currently made up of 91 per cent male sergeants and 9 per cent female

sergeants. The Force is looking at flexible working arrangements to increase the number of female sergeants working in this area.

- 5.3 The Committee requested further statistics on the ethnicity of detainees broken down across the custody centres, in order to develop further contextual understanding.

Analysis of Dissatisfaction

6. The Committee has been concerned for some time that current analysis of complaints handled by PSD was not a complete picture of public feedback on service. The Committee was pleased to note therefore, that since January 2010, a database to capture public feedback has been in place. A quarterly report, based on this data, is produced for the Force's Organisational Development Meeting, to provide an overview of the public dissatisfaction landscape, update relevant activity and identify areas of risk from Direction and Control complaints. The Authority is represented at this meeting by the lead member for Diversity, Ms E Daniel. The Committee considered the data available and requested regular future reports which would become more informative as the data available for analysis grew.

European Forum for Urban Safety

- 7.1 A report was provided to the PSC to update the Committee on the Independent CCTV Monitoring Scheme (ICMS) and the impact this initiative by the Authority was having locally, nationally and internationally. The scheme was launched in March 2010 and inspections of CCTV are now being carried out on behalf of the public of Sussex. The instigation of this scheme through the PSC has received a great deal of coverage, including in local and European media. The Chairman of the Authority was a guest speaker at the Conference of the European Forum for Public Safety.
- 7.2 The Assistant Chief Executive has written to the Policing Minister to notify him of the Authority's Independent CCTV Monitoring Scheme, to help inform the national debate on the use of CCTV and the checks and measures that can be put in place to reduce public concern over the use of camera monitoring in a public place.
- 7.3 The PSC commends the work undertaken by the volunteers in the Independent CCTV Monitoring Scheme for their time in performing a valuable scrutiny role on behalf of the public of Sussex.

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme (ICVS)

- 8.1 The Committee oversees the management of the ICVS on behalf of the Authority. The Committee welcomed the representation by Mr J Wales on behalf of the Authority's ICVS panel co-ordinators. Mr J Wales is the ICV representative on the Professional Standards Committee.
- 8.2 The Committee was pleased to note that the ICV Scheme Manager has attended the ICV Regional Meeting in March this year, and contributed to the debates about national practice. ICVs have been invited to two training sessions this year, organised by the ICV Scheme Manager. The topics covered mental health and Gypsies and Travellers. An invitation

was extended to ICVs to attend the annual ICV seminar in Hampshire. A total of eight ICVs attended, along with the Scheme Manager. An event is being organised for ICVs in the autumn, where one of the topics for discussion will be young people in the Criminal Justice System. This event will take place during a weekend, to enable as many ICVs as possible to attend.

- 8.3 A summary of the ICV visiting statistics for the period 1 October 2009 to 31 March 2010 was discussed. Statistics show that fewer than 10 per cent of the completed visiting forms indicate that physical, cultural and religious requirements are not being addressed. In these instances the custody staff are notified and the matters receive attention.
- 8.4 The Committee encouraged the redesign of the visit report form to allow more room for the visitors' comments. Examples of other authorities' forms are being obtained and a small working group of ICV panel co-ordinators will meet to work on the layout of the new form.
- 8.5 The Committee particularly welcomed a briefing on the Drugs Intervention Project (DIP) that is being trialled in custody centres. Any detained person admitted into custody for acquisitive crime is required to take a saliva test for opiates. If this proves positive, the detained person is obliged to see a drugs worker while in custody. It has been reported that a reduction in crime of between four and seven per cent is being experienced in the areas where this scheme is operating.
- 8.6 The Authority has received a large number of applicants to join its ICVS and a recruitment programme is currently underway, which will result in the appointment of ICVs to the panels in Worthing, Brighton and Eastbourne. This will be completed by August 2010.
- 8.7 The Committee remained seriously concerned over a long-standing issue relating to poor ventilation in Hastings Custody Centre. This matter has been raised on numerous occasions by ICVs and as a result is now on the Sussex Police risk register. The Committee have asked Mr G Daniel JP, to personally look into this on behalf of the Authority, and it is recommended that the Lead Member for Estates joins him in that consideration. The matter has also been raised by Corporate Governance Committee at its meeting on 24 June 2010 during its scrutiny of the risk register, at which further information was requested.

Conclusion

9. The Professional Standards Committee is maturing into an effective vehicle to scrutinise Sussex Police performance relating to complaints, custody and CCTV. This process of improvement is continuous and the issues raised elsewhere in this agenda relating to the role of scrutiny committees is very relevant to the PSC.

Recommended – that

- (1) The Authority welcomes closer engagement with the IPCC;
- (2) The Authority thanks the volunteers of both the long established ICVS and the recently created ICMS, for their

continued public spirited generosity in fulfilling a fundamentally important scrutiny function; and

- (3) The Authority's Lead Member for Estates is asked to review with Mr G Daniel JP the issues relating to ventilation at Hastings Custody Centre, to satisfy the Authority that what is being undertaken to improve the conditions is timely, effective and reasonable.

GORDON BULL
Chairman

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