

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 7 JULY 2010

INDEPENDENT POLICE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

REPORT BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND CHIEF CONSTABLE

Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting in January 2010, the Professional Standards Committee (PSC) were concerned about the delays at the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) in dealing with appeals relating to Sussex Police.
- 1.2 This report updates the Committee on progress on this matter and other issues covered with the IPCC at a recent meeting.

Meeting with London and South East Commissioner

- 2.1 As a result of that discussion, it was agreed that the Chairman of the Professional Standards Committee would write to the London and South East Commissioner of the IPCC. At its meeting in March 2010, the Committee received a copy of the letter that was sent to the Regional Commissioner, and as a result of that letter, the Chairman of the Professional Standards Committee received a response from Mr Mike Franklin and a meeting was arranged for the Chairman of the Professional Standards Committee and the Assistant Chief Executive to meet with Mr Franklin to discuss the IPCC's relationship with Sussex and particularly the issue of appeals.
- 2.2 The meeting took place on 26 May 2010 in London and was a useful and detailed discussion around all matters that relate to the IPCC's involvement with Sussex Police. The meeting covered issues such as the outstanding appeals for Sussex, the localised handling of complaints as a best practice principle, and areas of concern as expressed by the IPCC relating to Sussex.
- 2.3 At the time of the meeting with Mike Franklin there were 30 live appeals and at the time of the preparation of this report, there were 22 appeals outstanding. Appendix A shows the total number of appeals for the last 12 months. Whilst it is not suggested that this fall is as a direct result of the letter from Sussex, it is recognised that the points we raised were both timely and pertinent and were looked at in detail by Mike Franklin personally following receipt of the letter. It is recommended that this Committee continues to routinely monitor the volume of appeals outstanding by the IPCC to ensure continued pressure is placed upon the IPCC to reduce the number of appeals at any one time which can only be in the best interest of complainants and the officers involved.
- 2.4 Appendix B shows a comparison of the number of appeals and the number of appeals held by the IPCC by force within Sussex's Most Similar Forces (MSF) grouping. It shows that Sussex has generally an average number of

appeals and a slightly above average number of appeals upheld (although the numbers are still low) particularly in relation to appeals relating to investigations. It is recommended that the committee appoints a member of the PSC to investigate this in more depth and to report back to the next meeting.

- 2.5 Mr Franklin stressed the IPCC's principal push towards complaints being handled locally wherever possible, particularly down to Basic Command Unit (BCU) and district/borough level. The IPCC believed that there remains a role for the centre, through Professional Standards Department and the Authority, to professionally own those complaints, ensuring that some element of quality assurance is applied to local investigations and local resolutions. Mr Franklin suggested that the Authority ought to be aware which officer, division, borough or district within the Force area was best at locally resolving complaints, and then to ask the Force how those lessons are then learnt for the benefit of the wider Force, but particularly the public. It is therefore recommended that the Professional Standards Committee is advised on local resolution statistics for Sussex to directly answer these two points that the London and South East Commissioner posed to the Authority. The Committee would then more routinely seek to understand better how local resolution is reported within Sussex and how customer service is improved as a result of the lessons learnt, particularly as the number of local resolutions of complaints in Sussex has fallen slightly in 2009/10 compared to the previous year.
- 2.6 The point was also made to Mr Franklin that the Authority are an interested party to IPCC findings that relate to complaints in Sussex and Mr Franklin agreed that it would be wholly appropriate for the Authority to be copied in to IPCC findings routinely, particularly in high profile cases that may well have a media interest in the local area. Mr Franklin welcomed the improvements to the monitoring of Professional Standards more generally in Sussex and felt that regular meetings with the Authority ought to be now introduced and he would seek to do so alongside his regular meetings with the Chief Constable and the Head of Professional Standards Department. It is therefore recommended that the Authority takes up this offer and seeks to ensure that these meetings are timetabled for the future with immediate effect.

Conclusion

3. The meeting with Mr Franklin and the Chairman of the Professional Standards Committee was both productive and positive, with important implications for the work of this Committee.

Recommended – That

- (1) the Committee welcomes the reduction in the volume of outstanding Sussex appeals at the IPCC;
- (2) the Committee continues to routinely scrutinise the volume of appeals outstanding by the IPCC;

- (3) the Committee appoints a member of the PSC to explore in more detail the issues relating to the above average number of appeals upheld by the IPCC to see if there are any lessons to be learned;
- (4) the Committee requests a report to the next meeting on local resolutions in Sussex, with particular emphasis on the capturing and dissemination of lessons learned and to report back to the next PSC; and
- (5) the Authority takes up the offer from the IPCC to meet regularly with the Chairman of the Professional Standards Committee and to ensure that these meetings are timetabled with immediate effect.

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