



**Use of Force Scrutiny Panel Meeting
Wednesday 24th September 2024, 2pm – 5pm
Three Rivers District Council Offices
Minutes**

Attendees

Chris Cowdrey (Chair)	CCo	Paulette Reed	PR
Andrew Taylor	AT	Lesley MacArthur	LMac
Asha Vesudevan	AV	Valerie Shrimplin	VS
Dennis Elam	DE	John Gillett	JG
Jack Anderson-Player	JAP	Lorraine Edwards	LE
Jonathan Ash-Edwards	Police & Crime Commissioner OPCC		JAE
Amie Birkhamshaw	Deputy CEO, OPCC		AB
Keeley Smyley	Complaints Lead, OPCC		KS
Lucy Nicolson-James	Policy Officer, OPCC		LNJ
Ch Supt Jon Simpson	Herts Constabulary		JS
Insp Clare Cray	Herts Constabulary		CCr
Sgt Adrian Pikett	Herts Constabulary		AP
Sue McNeill (Minutes)	OPCC		SMc

Also present: PS Neath, DC Riley, PC Woodage and PC Jones-Williams.

1	Welcome and introductions
1.1	The Chair (CCo) opened the meeting and welcomed the panel, officers and observers, particularly PCC Jonathan Ash-Edwards, Ch Supt Jon Simpson and Jack Anderson Player, new panel member. CCo thanked Three Rivers District Council for hosting the meeting.
1.2	Apologies were noted from Tara Bullworthy, Nick Rowlands, Jamal Pasha, Nicole Moran, Nicola Hunt, Russell Dyke, Elaine Dyke, Zoe Wright, Anne Griffiths, Mohammad Islam Ruman, Godfrey Minsky, Daren Power, Martin Jackson, Sarah Simons, Jeffrey Burke, Andrew Hatton, Jojo Godfrey, Phil Diamond and Eddie McCarroll.
2	Minutes, actions and matters arising from the last meeting
2.1	The minutes of the last meeting were agreed (pack item 1.) The action tracker was updated (item 2). No issues were raised at the previous meeting requiring Constabulary feedback.

2.2	AP advised the panel that in terms of the feedback and learning loop, an additional layer of review has been added. Should an officer's engagement be flagged as red by the panel, an item of footage will be provided for review at the six months point. This is to ensure that any learning has embedded and improvement (or otherwise) is subject to the same scrutiny.
2.3	The matter of unconscious bias was raised. The panel was concerned that if they were aware the officer had previously performed poorly, this may jaundice their review. Whilst the selection of incidents is random, AP and AB agreed that the process for ensuring the footage was selected without prior knowledge of purpose had yet to be finalised.
3	Police and Crime Commissioner Jonathan Ash-Edwards
3.1	JAE thanked the panel members for their commitment to the scrutiny process. He reminded that independent scrutiny was fundamental in assisting with his statutory responsibility to hold the Chief Constable to account, to increase transparency and, ultimately, improve public trust and confidence in the police service.
3.2	JG asked if police officers were affected by the current backlash in terms of public confidence. JAE acknowledged that negative reporting impacted all communities and affected all police forces. Complaints and PSD data confirmed that levels of professionalism had been maintained in the county, which would not be of interest to the press. Where less than an acceptable level of service had been provided, systems were in place to highlight and address these. Scrutiny formed part of that process.
3.3	No other questions were asked, but CCo thanked the PCC for joining the panel as it offered an assurance that the effort and commitment shown by volunteers had value and a meaningful purpose.
4	Ch Supt Jon Simpson – Police Powers Lead
4.1	JS introduced himself to the panel, explained his role within Local Policing Command East and how, as part of the recent restructure, he had become the Constabulary Lead for Police Powers. He assured that, although the Operational Strategy Team had been disbanded, both Insp Cray and Sgt Pikett would continue to support the panels.
4.2	As Chair of the Police Powers Board (PPB), JS was keen to attend the independent scrutiny panel meetings to understand the mechanics and processes, particularly in terms of feedback and learning. The PPB is keen to understand disproportionality and is building on the work of the Race Inclusion Board.

4.3	JS thanked AP and CCr for supporting the panels and producing meaningful feedback in the reviews provided to officers and supervisors. He also expressed sincere thanks to panel members, adding that the Constabulary relied on the panel to act as ‘critical friend’ in order to highlight both good and bad practices, allowing the Constabulary to improve.
5	Use of Force Dip Sampling Feedback
5.1	CCo reminded that officers were present for operational guidance only. The panel decision should be made prior to asking for advice. The scrutiny took place between 2.30pm-4.05pm.
5.2	Group A
5.2.1	Item 1: Custody Having been advised that this incident had been referred to PSD, the footage was removed prior to being reviewed by the panel.
5.2.2	Item 2: Taser The incident was well handled. Actions were calm and appropriate. The panel was pleased to see that officers removed a female and children away from the scene. The report was very detailed in what was a chaotic and difficult situation. Officers’ wellbeing was checked after the event. The panel questioned why two officers deployed taser and whether it could have been discharged sooner but agreed that officers would have individually assessed the situation from separate vantage points. Commendation recommended. Green 1
5.2.3	Item 3: PAVA, handcuffs & ground restraint The panel questioned whether the decision to deploy PAVA was made too easily, although they acknowledged that a single officer was dealing with the detainee. The officer appeared to drag the male by his wrists due to the detainee’s non-compliance. An off-duty MPS officer assisted the Herts officer to get the detainee into the recovery position. Although overall graded Green 1, one panel member questioned whether the decision to arrest was too quick. Green 1
5.2.4	Item 4: Limb restraint & handcuffs The accompanying statement followed the National Decision-making Model. The incident involved an allegation of XL bully dogs attacking in a home environment. The actions and aftercare were good. Handcuffs were justified. The panel was pleased to see that the officers removed all people from the house who might otherwise have been at risk. Green 1

5.3	Group B
5.3.1	<p>Item 6: Custody – ground restraint & handcuffs</p> <p>The panel felt that officers had insufficient control over the situation. The handling was disorganised; no one seemed to take the lead. The detainee had an artificial limb and there was no explanation at the outset as to why the prosthetic leg had been removed in the first place. The panel viewed the female officer’s actions as unprofessional. She demonstrated poor communication and seemed out of her depth. The handcuffs were positioned and loosened when the detainee complained that they were too tight. The detainee almost managed to escape the cell twice. The incident was poorly managed. Amber</p>
5.3.2	<p>Item 7: Handcuffs, limb & ground restraint</p> <p>The officer who took charge of the incident handled the matter well, although there were several officers at the scene and the panel felt that this would appear concerning from an onlooker’s perspective. The panel was concerned that the detainee managed to grab the PAVA from the officer. Green 2</p>
5.3.3	<p>Item 8: Handcuffs</p> <p>When reviewing the footage, the panel noted that the audio recording was very poor. The female officer was pleasant and seemed in control of the situation. Green 1</p>
5.4	<p>General comments: Overall, the panel was pleased to note the quality and consistency of professionalism displayed by most officers dealing with difficult situations.</p>
6	BWV Retention Policy
6.1	<p>The BCH policy document was circulated prior to the meeting (item 3.) AP reminded the panel that the policy dictates the length of time footage is retained, depending on tags added at the point of upload to the Digital Asset Management System. Unless marked ‘evidential’ the footage will automatically delete after 90 days.</p>
7	Complaint Resolution Team (CRT) Update
7.1	<p>KS shared the quarterly data with the panel (item 4.) She reminded that the purpose of the team was to attempt low level service recovery, adding that PAVA and Taser complaints would be referred to PSD. KS advised that where several low-level complaints are made against an individual officer, once triggered, these are also referred to PSD.</p>
7.2	<p>During April – September, only 4% of all complaints received by the team involved use of force. 64% of these were referred to PSD for the above reasons. 34% of the remaining cases</p>

	resulted in low level recovery where the complaint was not upheld and no learnings identified.
7.3	<p>AT commented that the deployment of different uses of force varies, with the use of handcuffs being the most prevalent. He suggested that it would be interesting to know the level of complaint proportionate to force used. This detail could assist with understanding complainant motivation to report the incidents.</p> <p>Action: KS to consider adding ‘use vs complaint proportionality data’ to future presentations.</p>
8	OPCC Update
8.1	<p>AB updated the panel on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August Accountability and Performance Meeting (live broadcast): The PCC and Chief Constable discussed the annual findings on police powers and the improvements made in accurate recording as highlighted by HMICFRS as an Area For Improvement. August APM can be viewed here Whilst not mandated to write statements relating to force used, local policy sets out clear expectation that a statement will be made justifying use. The current level sees a 40% increase on statement provision against the same period for 2024-25. • Disproportionality in Taser use: having recognised the disproportionate use of taser against black individuals, the PCC raised this topic with the Chief Constable. The data showed that black individuals were five times more likely to be subject to taser use. The Constabulary will set up working groups to provide additional dip sampling opportunities to understand the context of use, nature of incidents and potential trends. This has also been raised with the Race Inclusion Board. <p>CCo reminded that the panel had recently conducted a deep dive on Taser use involving black individuals and no issues were highlighted by the Independent Scrutiny Panel.</p>
9	Any Other Business
9.1	<p>CCo stated that he was aware of a training video produced by PSD, which was available to officers via the intranet. He asked whether the panel could have access to this training material. AB agreed to source the video and consider how best to present it to the panel.</p> <p>Action: OPCC to source PSD training footage for review by UoF Panel</p>
9.2	No other items raised. CCo closed the meeting.

10	Date of next meeting: Thursday 27 th November 2025, 10am – 1pm University of Hertfordshire, De Havilland Campus, Mosquito Way, AL10 9UF
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