



**Police & Crime
Commissioner**
FOR HERTFORDSHIRE

Use of Force Scrutiny Panel Meeting
Thursday 27th March 2026, 10:00am – 13:00pm
Roseanne House
Minutes

Attendees

Chris Cowdrey (Chair)	CCo	Valerie Shrimplin	VS
Andrew Taylor	AT	Elaine Dyke	ED
Godfrey Minsky	GM	Nick Rowlands	NR
Dennis Elam	DE	Harvey Marshall	HM
Russel Dyke	RD	Martin Jackson	MJ
Joanne (Jojo) Godfrey	JG	Tara Bullworthy	TB
Nigel Marshall	NM	Anne Griffiths	AG
Nicola Hunt	NH	Lorraine Edwards	LE
Andrew Hatton	AH	Linda Martin	LM
Phillip Diamond	PD	Daren Power	DP
Mohammed Islam Ruman	MIR		
Supt. David Cooke	Strategic Delivery Lead, OPCC		DC
Scott Hague	Policy & Partnership Delivery Manager, OPCC		SH
Charlotte Rainer	Policy and Partnerships Manager, OPCC		CR
Eleanor Makoni	Policy Officer, OPCC		EM
Keeley Smyley	Complaints and Public Contact team leader, OPCC		KS
Ch insp. Mark Collin	Herts Constabulary		MC
Sgt. Helen Wise	Herts Constabulary		HW
Insp Clare Cray	Herts Constabulary		CCr

Eleanor Makoni (Minutes)

Also present: Cadets Eva Rhodes and Hannah Gashi, Special Sgt David Chesney, Sgt Katie Selby

1	Welcome and introductions
1.1	The Chair (CCo) opened the meeting and welcomed the panel, officers and observers, and started with a round of introductions. A warm welcome was extended to Sergeant Helen Wise, who will be supporting the panel from the Constabulary, as well as to the Police Cadets who attended as observers.

1.2	Apologies were noted from: - Jamal Pasha, Linda Blake, Asha Vesudevan, Lesley Macarthur, John Gillett, Nicole Moran, Jeffrey Burke, Paulette Reed and Jack Anderson-Player
2	Minutes, actions and matters arising from the last meeting
2.1	The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.
2.2	Sarah Simons has recently resigned from the panel due to a new job opportunity. CCo expressed thanks for her commitment to the panel and wished her well in her new role.
3	Constabulary feedback
3.1	Clare Cray (CC) provided an update on Mental Health Training for Officers. CC explained that all officers receive annual PPST training, which includes a range of scenario-based exercises designed to reflect real-life situations. Several of these scenarios focus specifically on mental-health-related incidents and place strong emphasis on effective communication, de-escalation techniques, appropriate positioning, and maintaining suitable eye contact to support safe and sensitive interactions. CC noted that additional communication and mental health training has been co-developed with street triage teams to strengthen officers' skills in responding to individuals in crisis. She added that officers also receive inputs on suicide bereavement and related safeguarding to better support vulnerable people and families.
3.2	A concern was raised about the involvement of a second officer referenced in a previous BWV case discussed at the panel meeting in January 2026. It was noted that this issue had already been identified and picked up by the Professional Standards Department (<u>PSD</u>) prior to the panel raising it. PSD's involvement is ongoing; however, CC advised that no further details can be shared at this stage due to the sensitivity of the case and the need to protect the integrity of the investigation.
3.3	<u>Update on Taser 10 Rollout:</u> Taser 10 provides officers with a significantly increased range (approximately 32 ft compared with the previous 10 ft). The device requires officers to fire two separate probes, allowing for more accurate and controlled placement.
4	Complaints Team Update – Keeley Smyley
4.1	Team Capacity & Backlog Keeley (KS) noted a significant increase in the volume and complexity of complaints, largely driven by the rise in AI-generated submissions, which is creating additional workload pressures • Current backlog 167 complaints (previously over 200).

	KS mentioned ongoing resource challenges arising from staff turnover and wider OPCC changes, and that a secondee, Kate Mullins, has joined from the Constabulary to support case handling. Use of Force Complaints –Overview KS provided the panel with an overview of Use of Force data covering the October 2025 – December 2025 reporting period. A total of 4,233 use of force records were submitted, with 22 complaints received in relation to use of force, representing a very low proportion when considered against overall activity. In the same period, the OPCC received 394 complaints in total, including those not related to use of force. KS also referred to a chart highlighting cases that may require referral to PSD. These referrals typically relate to potential conduct concerns, questions around officer decision-making, or matters requiring independent review to ensure appropriate oversight and accountability.
4.2	Themes & Examples Some complaints raised issues that required referral to the PSD, including allegations of serious misconduct, multiple related complaints linked to a single individual, searches involving a firearm + a taser automatically PSD and concerns arising from searches or use of force. Each matter was assessed in line with legal requirements and safeguarding considerations. Patterns & Trends There were no consistent geographic concerns identified; however, a previous issue in Chorleywood was linked to an individual officer who is now under PSD investigation. The panel discussed whether upheld complaints should automatically be referred to them. It was agreed that cases would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and flagged to the Chair for a decision on whether they should be presented to the panel.
5	Panel 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 10:30am – 12:00pm which was cut down slightly to accommodate panel update at the end. There was an under 18 deep dive during this meeting. A total of nine pieces of use of force footage were reviewed.
5.2	Group 1 feedback
5.2.1	5 Videos were looked at from group 1: two green 1, one Green 2, one undecided (due to insufficient statement given) and 1 Red 5 rating was given. The Red 5 rating was applied due to concerns about the use of handcuffs in the circumstances and the wording used in relation to mental health. The force used after the handcuffs were double-locked was considered excessive.

	A Green 2 rating was awarded by the panel due to the operational risks associated with the use of the taser, alongside broader concerns regarding the safety and appropriateness of its deployment in the circumstances. The video was recorded as ‘undecided’ as it related to custody Use of Force footage. The panel felt it could not be fairly assessed due to the absence of the full statement and the lack of audio on the custody footage, which made the circumstances and level of force unclear.
5.3	Group 2 feedback
5.3.1	4 videos were assessed by the group 2: with 3 Green 1 and 1 Red 5 was awarded on one of the videos. Red 5 awarded was a result of the officer spraying PAVA out of his window where the panel felt that spraying out of a moving vehicle compromised safety of the detainee due to being on a moving vehicle (bicycle) in traffic. Additionally, panel members expressed dissatisfaction that the BWV footage failed to capture incidents effectively, as the camera models can swivel during movement, resulting in poor visual evidence. While the swivel mechanism is designed for adjustability, it becomes loose over time. CC stated newer models are expected to resolve this. Other issues raised included concerns that handcuffs do not always tighten sufficiently for smaller-framed detainees, creating a risk that individuals may be able to slip out of them.
6	Chair update
6.1	No update given
7	OPCC Update
7.1	Supt. David Cooke (DC) outlined proposals to improve efficiency and impact of scrutiny panels following from previous panel: Proposal for “Omnicompetent Panels” Panels would scrutinise Use of Force and Stop & Search within the same meeting, allowing: - More holistic oversight - Moving from bi-monthly to quarterly day meetings - Streamlined training and participation for end-to-end understanding of officer encounter Panel members voiced a ‘mixed model was best’, where some sessions remained dedicated to specific areas, while others combined all three. Panel members also expressed their concerns around having a full day of scrutiny, particularly for those members who sit on both panels.

	There was also discussion about reviewing cases in smaller groups, which would enable multiple groups to collectively review a greater number of cases, allowing for a wider range of records to be scrutinised.
7.2	Record Selection: Moving Toward Risk-Based Sampling The current “blind” method may be replaced or supplemented with a risk-based approach, prioritising cases: • Flagged by supervisors • With outcomes indicating potential concern Panel members emphasised that any such change must be clearly communicated to avoid misleading public perception, particularly where an increase in ‘Red’ outcomes could be misinterpreted. There was also a suggestion to have the data subgroup review this approach and support the selection process.
7.3	A feedback form was circulated after the panel meeting to capture views from all panel members.
8	Any Other Business
8.1	CCo and Chief Insp Mark Collins: acknowledged CC’s last panel meeting, expressed appreciation and thanks, and recognised the significant contribution she made to the panel during her time.
	Date of next meeting: Wednesday 3rd of June 2026 10am-1pm Rosanne House, Bridge Road, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6UB