

PART ONE

ITEM 09

To: **Joint Audit Committee**

Date: **31st March 2015**

By: **Ian Perkin, Treasurer**

Title: **Complaints Process**

Purpose of report

To update members on how the complaints process arrangements for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Force and how they link together.

Recommendation

The Committee notes the arrangements for complaints handling.

Equality and Human Rights Implications: None arising

Risk: No specific risks arise from this report.

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Introduction

Under the Police Act 1996 and the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey (OPCC) has a number of specific duties in relation to the handling of complaints. The OPCC has a responsibility to manage complaints it may receive against Chief Officers of the Force, its own members of staff, contractors, the Deputy Commissioner and the Commissioner itself. The OPCC also has a duty to keep itself informed about complaint and discipline matters within Surrey Police Force (as set out in section 15 of the Police Reform Act 2002). Similarly, it is the responsibility of the Chief Constable of a Force, by delegated authority through its Professional Standards Department (PSD), to manage complaints against its officers and staff.

Complaints Sharing Protocol

Due to the public facing nature of the OPCC, it receives a number of complaints from members of the public that it has no jurisdiction to investigate. Therefore, arrangements are in place so that when the OPCC receives a complaint that relates to the conduct and performance of a Surrey Police officer or member of staff, it will forward the complaint to PSD as soon as possible and write/contact the complainant to inform them of this. PSD will then update the OPCC on what action has been taken.

Although most of the complaints/incidents reported to the OPCC are technically not part of its remit, the Commissioner is keen to be seen to be responding to peoples' concerns. Therefore, on occasion the OPCC will investigate the background to complaints. In these instances the OPCC will ask PSD to provide it with the information it requests and keep PSD informed of how that information is used.

Occasionally the OPCC receives requests for action/update on on-going operational matters. These requests are sent to Surrey Police's Strategic Planning Department, which is the OPCC's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) into the Force. These requests are recorded on the OPCC Contact Log.

The Contact Log

The OPCC keeps a record of all contact it receives on the Contact Log. The Log is an Excel document that everyone in the OPCC has access to. It can be searched by date, subject, name, priority and outcome. The Log is reviewed and updated every day.

In the last quarter (Oct-Dec '14) the Office was contacted 277 times. 236 of these were direct complaints against an officer's behaviour or expressions of dissatisfaction about the way Surrey Police managed its policing. There is inevitably some duplication in these figures, as every contact is recorded. For instance, within this quarter one complainant contacted this Office 11 times about the investigation Surrey Police had taken in to the theft of his bicycle, and another contacted us 22 times about the actions officers had taken when attending a domestic incident.

PSD Quarterly Performance Reports

PSD provide the OPCC with a quarterly breakdown of the complaints received by type, location, ethnicity, age, etc. The quarterly performance report also compares Surrey's performance with other Force's in the Most Similar Force group determined by the Home Office, which brackets Surrey with Cambridgeshire, Dorset and Thames Valley.

In the last quarter (Oct-Dec '14) Surrey Police had 121 complaint cases under investigation, totalling 366 allegations. Most of these were in the North and West of the county and were around incivility/fairness or neglect/irregularity. There were 188 complainants in the last quarter, of whom 6.2% (10) were Asian and 6.2% were Black.

PSD Arrangements

PSD work to the IPCC Statutory Guidance to the Police Service & Complaints Regulations 2013 when complaints or service dissatisfaction is reported. Initially an assessment will be completed and 'service recovery' considered.

Due to staff shortages, short term contracts and agency resource being utilised, a large backlog of complaints arose last year resulting in further fresh complaints being made. This situation is now under control with no backlog in existence and permanent staff posts back on line following a healthy and successful recruitment drive.

Furthermore, following an external review of its PSD arrangements, Surrey Police now places greater priority on the early and local resolution of complaints. This sees a newly established 'Front of House' team working closely with neighbourhood managers and departmental heads to establish and assist complainants with what they wish to achieve/outcomes they desire.

Alternatively if more a general 'direction and control' or organisational issue is raised it is passed to the Strategic Planning Department who oversees and liaises with the relevant Force department around process improvement. In these cases the department head will correspond with the complainant from thereon in directly.

Overall

Both offices work closely but flexibly together and regularly weekly case by case discussions take place. Additionally complaint file dip checks and review are completed by the OPCC regularly.

The OPCC is fortunate to have a good working relationship with its Force's PSD.