

Report of the Complaints Sub-Committee

The Panel met on Thursday, 13 March to consider the complaint lodged by Mrs S alleging a poor level of service regarding correspondence and communication with the North Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and her office.

The complaint referred to: difficulties in making contact and getting a response; problems and confusion in arranging a meeting with the PCC; and the stance the PCC has taken regarding the complaint made by Mrs S to the Professional Standards Department of the North Yorkshire Police.

Present: Cllr Fiona Fitzpatrick, Cllr Mick Griffiths (Chair), Santokh Sidhu, Community Co-opted Member,

In attendance Ray Busby, Officer

The Panel **CONSIDERED** the evidence submitted by Mrs S and the Commissioner.

The Panel found no evidence of the complainant's claim that political pressure was being brought to bear on her case.

The Panel is sympathetic to Mrs S's suggestion that, in part due to avoidable administrative issues regarding postal addresses, initial attempts to contact and meet the PCC had not gone as well as they might have done. After this initial setback, however, on the evidence before it, the Panel believes that the PCC's approach in her dealings with Mrs S has been both respectful and timely. The PCC appears to have recognised the impact the original police investigation has had on Mrs S and the distress it has caused to her and her family. On occasions, the interaction between the PCC's staff, Mrs S, and her family has been uncomfortable for all involved, but the Panel can find no evidence of inappropriate behaviour or unprofessionalism from the PCC and/or her staff, nor is there any indication that this interaction prejudiced the advice Mrs S and her family received.

The Panel notes the complainant's and the PCC's account of the disagreement that occurred at a public meeting. Given that these conflicting claims are based on individual perceptions, and the absence of any other further information on which the panel could make a judgement, it does not believe it is in a position to comment.

The Panel notes that when Mrs S referred to her complaint to the Police Standards Department, the PCC contacted the relevant officer in that department. As a matter of principle and good practice, it is vital that the PCC does not exert improper influence over the police standards complaints process, but equally, it was important

that, the PCC appreciated Mrs S's concern and evident anxiety. The PCC's action in checking that the complaint was being, or had been, dealt with and then advising Mrs S accordingly, yet intervening no further, is commensurate with the PCC's responsibilities.

Although it is unclear to the Panel whether an appeal was indeed lodged, the information from the PCC to Mrs S regarding her rights in this connection was accurate and clear.

1. On the matter of service from the PCC and her office, therefore, the Panel **CONCLUDED** that after an initial period when the exchange of correspondence and attempts to contact and meet the PCC had not gone as well as perhaps both the complainant and PCC would have liked, there is an audit trail of correspondence and contact indicating the PCC responded well, in the manner she ought to have.
2. Regarding the circumstances surrounding Mrs S's complaint to the Police Standards Department appeal, the Panel **CONCLUDED** that in the circumstances, the PCC's actions in ensuring that the matter was being looked into was an appropriate and proper level of intervention.

In the light of the above, and bearing in mind the Panel's limited powers of investigation, the panel also **CONCLUDED** that the options for informal resolution of this case appear to have been exhausted and therefore **RESOLVED** to take no further action in relation to this matter,

The Panel notes the conflicting claims regarding whether a "compliant" appeal to the Police Standards department has been lodged. Whilst it is not within the Panel's remit to make a determination on this issue, bearing in mind the strict rules regarding when appeals can be lodged, the Members of the Panel would urge the PCC to reassure herself once again that her understanding of the current position on this appeal is as recorded in her statement to the Panel.

COUNCILLOR MICK GRIFFITHS

13 March 2014