



**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**
For Leicester,
Leicestershire & Rutland

Your Communities - Your Commissioner

Ethics and Transparency Panel Annual Report

December 2024

Report Date	November 2024
Report Author	Vipal Karavadra, Ethics and Transparency Panel Chair
Security Classification	

Purpose of Report

1. As an advisory body to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), the Ethics and Transparency Panel is required to provide assurance to the Commissioner that ethics and integrity are embedded within Leicestershire Police and that the highest levels of professional standards and delivery of policing services to the public are being upheld, adding value beyond audit and scrutiny.
2. The Chair on behalf of the Ethics and Transparency Panel, brings this report to outline for the PCC how they are fulfilling their duty through the scrutiny of policies, reports and deep dives including the consideration of emerging local and national issues and current ethical dilemmas facing the force.
3. The purpose of this report is to highlight the work of the Panel and provide reassurance that policing is being carried out in a way that enhances internal and external trust and confidence in ethical governance and decision-making.

Request of the Board

4. In their role to advise on ethics and integrity, the Chair on behalf of the Ethics and Transparency Panel requests that the PCC and Chief Constable considers the contents of this report. The Panel would specifically like to ask the PCC and Chief Constable their opinion on the following questions;
 - a. Are they content in the way that the Ethics and Transparency Panel has held the Chief Constable to account on this important subject?
 - b. Would the PCC or Chief Constable like to make any recommendations or provide any feedback to the Ethics and Transparency Panel in relation to this matter?

Summary

5. Over the last year, Leicestershire Police ('the Force') and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) has demonstrated good standards of ethical conduct and service standards. This has been evidenced to the Ethics and Transparency Panel ('the Panel') in many ways, with one example being Leicestershire Police's self-evaluation of its policies and professional standards, in light of the Baroness Casey report into activities within the Metropolitan Police. This was a voluntary step that was supported by the Ethics and Transparency Panel.
6. The Panel have been pleased to see Leicestershire Police demonstrate high standards across various areas of the force, for example the force's LGBTQ+ policy and applied practice and the trauma informed approach that continues to be adopted in custody detention environments. There are however some areas where the Panel feel that standards could be further improved, for example the

considerations around and the impact of issuing of Out of Court Resolutions (OOCR) and evidence of victim blaming language frequently being used by staff and officers in documentation and in reports. The Panel feels that this is an organisational concern and is something both the OPCC and Leicestershire Police should prioritise and address in light of the Casey Review. Although this is progressively being challenged and addressed within the Domestic Abuse Resolution Team (DART), the Panel have not yet been assured that this is being addressed force wide or as fully as would be expected.

7. The panel has, on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner, scrutinised the Force's values and their application in a number of ways, including the use of a rolling action log to allow tracking of recommendations and feedback and through familiarisation visits to several departments. These have included Custody, Professional Standards, Tactical Support Team, Contact Management Department, Firearms, Road Policing, Communications Team, Prevent (terrorism strategy), DART and the Safeguarding Hub. Through this, Leicestershire Police and the OPCC have both provided the Panel with a focus for reflective learning and an understanding on ethical issues. This is reflected in and evidenced by the briefing provided to the Panel on the Israel-Palestinian Protests that were managed in a local industrial estate in Leicester and through the report submitted to the Panel at the September 2023 meeting with regard to the East Leicester Disorder that occurred locally.
8. The panel has had positive discussion within and outside of the organisation, especially but not exclusively, around issues affecting organisational culture. The Panel feels reassured that Leicestershire Police and the OPCC has considered the ethical impact of any planned organisational changes. The Panel understands that the force will have to continue to make significant budgetary related savings, having been briefed on outline plans around how these savings are to be gained and how the impact of them will be mitigated against. The Panel acknowledge the difficult times ahead but are assured the Force has plans in place to limit the affects as best as possible, especially with regard to front line policing.
9. As key part of the Panel's role is to help restore and maintain public trust and confidence in the police. The behind closed door approach exposed by the Casey review means cultural change needs to happen within the force and this is something the Panel will continue to support Leicestershire Police to embed.

Panel Background

10. Over the past 12 months the Ethics and Transparency Panel has convened over 10 times in the form of formal panel meetings and scrutiny sub-panel meetings to undertake crime sampling and reviews alongside attending various training sessions and ad hoc meetings when required. All Ethics and Transparency Panel meetings this year have been well attended by Panel members and Force representatives and the quorum has been met for every meeting. All meetings this year have had a good mix of representation and discussion and/or challenge.
11. There are currently 10 members on the Panel with differing lengths of tenure:
 - Vipal Karavadra (Chair) – member since September 2022
 - Dr Louise Bradley – member since September 2022
 - Matthew Youngs – member since September 2022
 - Kieran Breen - member since September 2023
 - Kathleen Harris-Leighton - member since September 2023
 - Lisa Vine - member since September 2023
 - Dr Denis Tanfa – member since October 2024
 - Nikki Plant - member since October 2024
 - Katie Walker - member since October 2024
 - Frances Deepwell - member since October 2024
12. The recent appointments will allow the Panel to further broaden its reach and cover more ground with respect to scrutiny and providing that assurance for public trust and confidence. This is especially important in light of the new enhanced scrutiny structure introduced this year.
13. This new structure involves 4 scrutiny sub-panels that undertake dip-sampling and reviews to supplement the work of the panel and provide a deeper insight into the application of processes, policy and procedure. Currently, the four sub-panels consist of the following areas of scrutiny:
 - Review of Public Complaints
 - Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel (CDSP)
 - Out of Court Resolutions (OOCR) Panel
 - Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel
14. All Panel members are assigned to a panel(s) dependent on area of interest and capacity on the Panels and are considered the lead member for that Panel on behalf of the Ethics and Transparency Panel. All 4 panels run on a quarterly reporting cycle and provide an annual report to the Ethics and Transparency Panel for comment. In the last year, an annual report has been provided by the OOCR Panel and the CDSP with the Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel Annual Report being due in December 2024.
15. The following information summarises the work of the Panel throughout these meetings over the last 12 months including the work of the scrutiny sub-

panels which have been regularly attended by the respective lead ethics members.

Review of Policies and Procedures

16. Over the last 12 months, the Panel have been provided with unfiltered access to policies and procedures across the force in relation to a range of topic areas including, but not limited to; Leicestershire Custody Procedures, the Strip Search of Females in Police Custody and Use of Force and the Policy and Guidance around the use of Spit Guards. The Panel has also had the opportunity to review and suggest amendments for the draft Trans and Non-binary Searches; Staff and Detainees Policy. A lead member from the Panel, with a background in LGBTQ+ and inclusion, is continuing to support and work with the force to refine the policy.
17. On the whole, the Panel has felt that any feedback and comment provided has been taken onboard swiftly and without issue. The Gifts and Gratuities Register is reviewed quarterly by the Panel to ensure that acceptance of any gifts and/or gratuities is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances. An example of the feedback given to the force is for them to provide further detail around the value of gifts and/or gratuities in order to allow the Panel to make informed decisions about whether they feel that it was appropriate for the gift and/or gratuity to be accepted in the situation recorded and ensure that the register as transparent as possible.

Ethical Dilemmas

18. The Panel has felt that the ethical dilemmas discussed at the meetings have been an important element of the Panel meetings. The Panel is provided with a different ethical dilemma that the force is currently or could be faced with, whose impact could be both local and/or national for discussion. Over the last 12 months, the Panel have provided comment and feedback on ethical dilemmas such as; the force's attendance at the Leicester Pride Parade, the force's decision on whether to engage in the Stonewall Workforce Equality Index and considerations around the force's approach and treatment towards Juveniles in Custody.
19. The Panel is pleased with the open discussions that they have been able to have with Leicestershire Police in respect of the above ethical dilemmas and with supporting members, as the Panel agrees that their comment, perspectives and feedback has always been received well.

Body Worn Video (BWV)

20. Over the last 12 months, the Panel has been provided with 8 randomly selected instances of Body Worn Video (BWV) footage for review in Panel meetings. As part of the Panel's scrutiny function, the use of force, proportionality and officers' general behaviour and interaction with the public are all elements that are taken into consideration when forming a view on whether the force and individual officer's responses to incidents have been appropriate and well handled.
21. Overall, the Panel has felt that the BWV footage reviewed over the last year has demonstrated examples of good practice and reasonable use of force. The Panel have been provided with the opportunity to review a range of incidents captured on BWV such as, stop and search, road traffic collisions, taser and high end tactics. A good example of this can be seen from the March meeting where the Panel was able to review BWV footage of spit guards being used when arresting a non-compliant suspect. The Panel commented on the professionalism of the officers involved in the incident, noting the exceptional patience that is required in these situations. The panel have felt reassured that spit guards are only used by officers as a last resort and preventative measure in relation to their own safety once all other avenues of de-escalation have been exhausted.

Ethics and Transparency Panel Scrutiny Sub-Panels

Review of Public Complaints

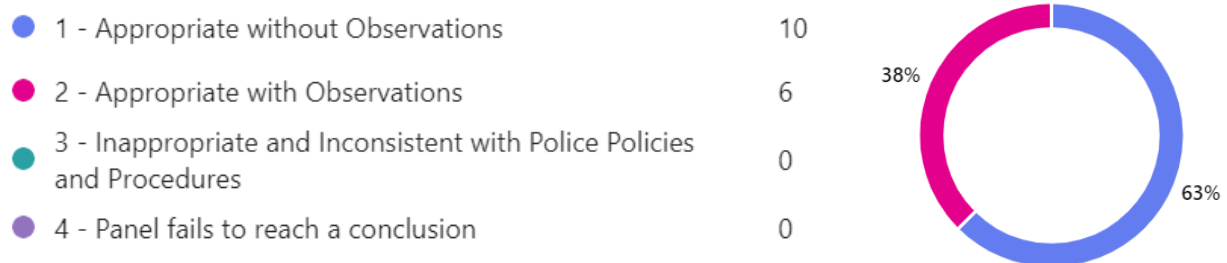
22. The purpose of reviewing closed public complaints is to scrutinise any irregularities, examine the code of conduct, behaviour, performance and adherence to policy and procedure of the police whilst performing their duty in protecting the public. The reviewing is undertaken exclusively by Ethics and Transparency Panel members and meetings are scheduled 4 times a year with a representative from the OPCC and Professional Standards present.
23. Panel members select up to 8 closed complaints each from a spreadsheet containing case numbers, the allegation result and types of complaints; for example impolite language, police action following contact, lack of fairness and impartiality and various others. When cases are collated, there can be a significant number of pages, including supplementary BWV footage which can take those reviewing some time to get through. The Panel recommends that a RAG rated overview be provided when selecting cases to provide an insight into serious and less serious complaints with a worry that the cases that really require review are not being scrutinised. Panel members also suggest that quality control be considered in relation to monitoring the standard of feedback being provided by members as this could be inconsistent.
24. As part of the review, Panel members complete an online feedback form which contains a number of questions including:
- Have the allegations been clearly identified

- Has the Complaint Handler responded to each of these allegations
- Do you feel that the outcome provided by the Complaint Handler was appropriate
- Overall Feedback

25. There are 4 categories used to code the review of complaints:

1. Appropriate without Observations
2. Appropriate with Observations
3. Inappropriate and Inconsistent with Police Policies/Procedures
4. Panel fails to reach Conclusion.

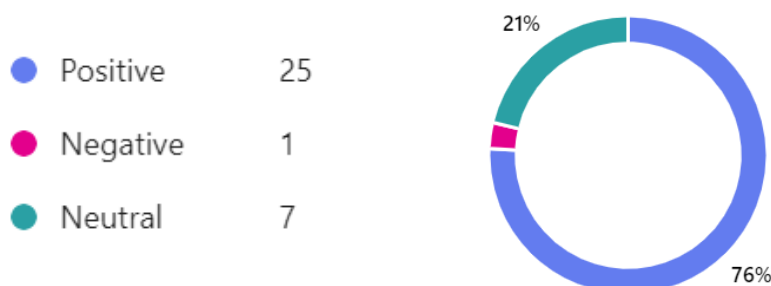
26. In the last 12 months, there have been 16 closed complaints reviewed by Panel members with the following observations:



27. Despite some observations, overall, the Panel were assured in all 16 cases that Leicestershire Police have been effective at dealing with the review of complaints and no gaps in assurance were identified. The Panel has generally been impressed with the methodical, transparent and professional way that complaints are handled and investigated. It is clear to the Panel that the force takes complaints seriously and are committed to reflecting and learning from feedback.

28. However, the Panel has also highlighted that in some cases, police officers have not seemed to understand basic aspects of key legislation and/or procedure when carrying out their duties. It is to be noted that this is to be an ongoing staff development issue and to be tracked for the future. The Panel also notes that often when officers are dealing with mental health and wellbeing issues, it is not clear if they are the correct people to be dealing with the situation at hand and there should be some consideration given to appropriate training and/or alternative support staff who should also be involved.

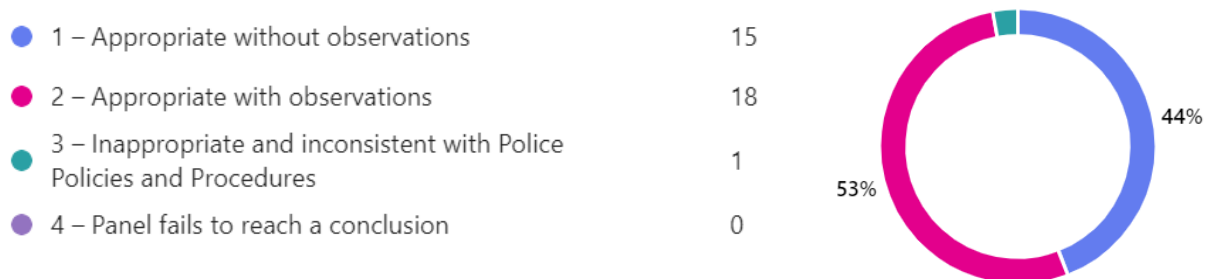
29. The purpose of the Custody Detention Scrutiny Panel (CDSP) is to review historic custody records to ensure that both local and national policies, procedures and legislation has been followed. The Panel objectively reviews a detained persons journey through the custody environment to provide assurances around lawful, proportionate and necessary implementation of police detention and custody procedures which are fundamental to public trust and confidence. The Panel is made up a selection of 6 Ethics and Transparency Panel members and Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) and meetings are scheduled 4 times a year with a representative from the OPCC and Custody present.
30. The Panel reviews a number of randomly selected custody records with the view to evaluating the professionalism, appropriateness, and timeliness of documentation for each individual who passes through custody. In addition to this, the panel also holds an advisory role, sharing feedback on quality assurance and updates to procedure.
31. A number of topic areas are reviewed which are shaped by local and/or national data or policing area concerns raised, with topics including, but not being limited to, strip search, juveniles, mental health and use of force.
32. Since the inception of the CDSP, the Panel has convened 3 times; May, August and November 2024. Across these 3 meetings, there have been a total of 34 custody records reviewed, covering multiple custody suites and a range of demographics. When reviewing the custody records, the Panel considers a variety of different questions including, length of detention, rights and entitlements, observational levels, mental health support and where applicable strip search and juveniles.
33. Of the 34 records dip-sampled over the last 12 months, the overall feedback provided on the custody records reviewed by the Panel:



34. Similarly to the review of complaints, There are 4 categories used to code the review of complaints:
1. Appropriate without Observations
 2. Appropriate with Observations
 3. Inappropriate and Inconsistent with Police Policies/Procedures

4. Panel fails to reach Conclusion.

35. In the last 12 months, there have been 34 custody records reviewed by Panel members with the following observations:



36. The Ethics and Transparency Panel members sitting on the CDSP felt that despite some observations, overall they were assured in all 34 cases that Leicestershire Police have been effective at dealing with detained persons in custody. It was identified that there was some gaps in assurance around no rationale being provided for keeping a juvenile in custody overnight and an instance where no verbal instruction was given to the detained person by Custody Staff on the cell CCTV being pixelated in the toilet area. This would have been particularly important in this case as it was clear that the detainee required an interpreter.

37. A positive theme however, identified by the Panel in the May 2024 meeting was the thorough and timely nature of documentation that took place in custody suites. Individuals were booked in quickly and there was clear reporting of welfare checks and food/drink offerings. It was acknowledged that the speed with which individuals were booked in was a national requirement but one that was also likely to vary, reflecting the demand on the Force across the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Out of Court Resolution (OOCR) Panel

38. The term 'Out of Court Resolutions' (OOCR) refers to a range of options available to the Police to use in certain cases as an alternative to a prosecution. By using these alternative resolutions correctly, the Police can deal with less serious offences, and offenders with little or no previous offending history in a way that is both proportionate and rehabilitative.

39. The purpose of the OOCR Panel is to scrutinise the appropriateness of use when it comes to Out of Court Resolutions. At each Panel meeting, the Panel observes 15 adult cases and 15 youth cases that are dealt with through an OOCR and the cases need to include 30% domestic incidents in line with national guidance. The panel then classify if the OOCR was handled

appropriately and consistently in line with Police Policies and/or the CPS Code of Practice.

40. There are 4 categories used to code the handling of cases:
1. Appropriate and consistent with Police Policies and/or the CPS Code of Practice,
 2. Appropriate with observations,
 3. Inappropriate and inconsistent with Police Policies and/or CPS Code of Practice
 4. Panel fails to reach a conclusion.
41. The panel meets virtually twice per year and membership includes; Magistrates, Police, CPS, and local services such as Turning Point and Victim First.
42. In the last 12 months, there have been 2 Panel meetings which took place on 7th March 2024 and 12th September 2024. Due to constraints within the Force and changes with OOCR that had recently been made, only 15 adult cases (5 were domestic) were reviewed in the March 2024 meeting:

1. Appropriate and consistent with Police policies and/or the CPS Code of Practice	1
2. Appropriate with observations	8
3. Inappropriate and inconsistent with Police policies and/or the CPS Code of Practice	6
4. Panel fails to reach a conclusion	0

43. In the September meeting 15 adult cases (5 were domestic) and 15 youth (5 were domestic) were scrutinised.

Adults:

1. Appropriate and consistent with Police policies and/or the CPS Code of Practice	5
2. Appropriate with observations	3
3. Inappropriate and inconsistent with Police policies and/or the CPS Code of Practice	7
4. Panel fails to reach a conclusion	0

Youth:

1. Appropriate and consistent with Police policies and/or the CPS Code of Practice	9
2. Appropriate with observations	5
3. Inappropriate and inconsistent with Police policies and/or the CPS Code of Practice	1
4. Panel fails to reach a conclusion	0

44. Following the September meeting, the Panel felt that Leicestershire Police was not effective when using OOCRs for adults, evidenced by 7 cases out of 15 being inappropriate and inconsistent with police policies and/or the CPS Code of Practice. The common issues identified were:
- Misuse of OOCR and not taking an offence forward to CPS/court when it should have been due to the seriousness of offence or offending history,
 - Not getting Inspector sign off when it was a policy requirement to do so,
 - Not referring offender to appropriate and relevant support services to impact behaviour; and
 - Issuing a voluntary referral when a conditional referral was more appropriate.
45. The Panel identified that there were some safeguarding concerns that were not properly risk assessed leaving victims, including potential victims, at future risk. A lack of appropriate safeguarding was also noted, which the Panel felt was most concerning as it means that the Leicestershire Police is not fulfilling their duty when it comes to protecting vulnerable people, especially in the event that something were to go wrong, it would directly impact public trust and confidence. It was also noted that when domestic cases were being reviewed, some summaries contained victim blaming language. This has been a recommendation made from other areas of the Panel's scrutiny and has been identified as a wider issue associated with domestic and sexual violence.
46. The Panel found that the youth cases observed scored much better, with 9 cases being appropriate and consistent with Police Policies and/or CPS Code of Practice. It has been noted that there is more wrap-around care and support for youths, which includes greater service involvement as cases go to a panel specifically for youths which is multidisciplinary and focused on the needs of the child. It was highlighted by the Panel that for adult cases where there are challenges to mental health and wellbeing, it is not only pushing people into offending but there is no equivalent 'vulnerable adult' panel. Exploring the feasibility of a 'Vulnerable Adult' Panel has been fed back as a recommendation as it has been identified that there is a gap from vulnerable children becoming vulnerable adults.
47. Where the Panel found that cases that were appropriate and consistent with Police Policies and/or CPS Code of Practice, it was found that officers seemed to fully understand the policy relating to OOCR for example, a gravity matrix was completed to assess risk, Inspector sign off was done when needed, and officers made suitable and impactful referrals to support services. The Panel provided views around education and providing positive feedback for officers so that they have the skills and knowledge needed to use OOCRs effectively in practice.

48. Compared to the last review in September 2023, the Panel found that there has been an improvement in the number of cases that were appropriate and consistent with Police Policies and/or CPS Code of Practice.

Hate Crime Scrutiny Sub Panel

49. The purpose of this sub board is to scrutinise the manner in which hate crimes are dealt with and ensure both national and local polices and proceeders have been followed.

50. The panel is the OPCC's only entirely voluntary panel and following a successful recruitment drive in April 2024, has 8 full time volunteers who attend 4 panels per year at FHQ. This panel is diverse in its representation and has several members with lived experience of hate crime.

51. The Panel review up to 3 cases of hate crimes per meeting which are selected at random by the OPCC. The panel then classify if the hate crime was handled appropriately and consistently in line with police policies and procedures.

52. There are 4 categories used to code the handling of cases:

1. Appropriate and consistent with Police Policies,
2. Appropriate with observations,
3. Inappropriate and inconsistent with Police Policies,
4. Panel fails to reach a conclusion.

53. Two panels have been held in 2024 and the results from the two combined are as follows:

1 (Appropriate and consistent with Police policies)	1
2 (Appropriate but with observations)	2
3 (Inappropriate and inconsistent with Police policies)	1
4 (Panel fails to reach a conclusion)	0

54. Overall we have had a positive impression of the Hate Crime Panel meetings themselves and the effectiveness of how the Force deal with Hate Crimes. This is primarily based up on two cases which were assessed, alongside discussions with police officers in attendance.

55. There was a general feeling that the police officers present were aware of any failings and willing to improve and the Hate Crime Panel members were able to ask questions and challenge ways of working, whilst consistently engaging in a respectful and open discussion. This was particularly encouraging.

56. It was the role of the Hate Crime Panel to answer specific questions for each case, e.g. was the victim given a chance to say what they wanted to happen, as only one example. It was noted that questions were not always answered in the software e.g. 'N/A', 'No' and 'Yes' were given, rather than just one correct answer. This made it challenging for the Hate Crime Panel Members to scrutinise and give a clear answer of 'Yes' or 'No' to specific questions.
57. This is where the police officers in the meeting were helpful, as they could highlight where something was suggested in the report and surmise what might have happened. However, this is not enough for the Hate Crime Panel to be able to scrutinise effectively.
58. Additionally, a homophobically motivated hate crime was mis-categorised as a racial/religiously motivated hate crime. This is not ideal for accurate statistics and data.
59. A notable change has already been implemented as a result of the Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel. A change of language on the Police recording system Niche has been implemented on the 15th October 2024 from 'gender expression' to 'gender identity' when describing how individuals identify themselves in regards to gender. This change is a direct result of the panel and will support victims going forward in feeling better represented by the Force. This is an excellent result for the short time that the panel has been running.

Recommendations

60. When considering the above summary, the Ethics and Transparency Panel makes the following recommendations to the Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner.
1. Continue to promote and develop partnerships with local community groups and leaders. These are especially important given the multicultural demographic of Leicestershire and Rutland, which should continue to be celebrated.
 2. Work needs to be done around the use of Out of Court Resolution, the appropriateness of when and how utilised.
 3. Consider the issue of victim blaming and the use of language around this.
 - a. This needs to be LLR priority for both the Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner.
 - b. Prioritising a policy around challenging victim blaming language and rephrasing terminology used Force wide is a simple, low cost, conscious change that would greatly impact public perception both directly for victims and also indirectly within the public when they hear how the Force chooses to speak about victims. The DART team has a workbook on 'language matters' so the policy is already there it just needs

to be actioned Force wide and consciously upheld by all staff in all forms of communication including internal reports and communication regardless of these not being available to the public and therefore public scrutiny.

- c. The DART team within the Force is leading the way with challenged such language who have deisgned an Investigation Workbook with a section alled 'language matters' to challenge and rephrase such language and terminology. With the support of Leadership this should be rolled out across the whole Force to ensure cultural change all teams as victim blaming is damaging to victim and the Force as it impacts public trust and confidence and in light of the Casey Review is something the Force should prioritise.

----- **End of Report** -----