



Complaints & Standards Committee

Terms of Reference

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Purpose

Policing in this country is grounded in the principle of 'policing by consent' from the general public. To maintain public trust, it is crucial that police powers are exercised fairly, impartially and to the highest ethical standards, ensuring police integrity.

The primary aim of this Committee is to provide independent scrutiny and assurance of the handling of complaints, conduct matters and professional standards by Thames Valley Police (TVP) and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), ensuring that professional standards are upheld.

The Committee supports the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in holding the Chief Constable (CC) to account and contributes to improving public confidence in policing.

In addition to oversight of complaints handling, the Committee will promote organisational learning by identifying systemic issues, emerging risks, and opportunities for continuous improvement in service delivery, culture and professional standards. The Committee will draw insight from a range of sources, including public complaints, internal conduct matters and other assurance mechanisms, to ensure that learning is identified, implemented and embedded effectively.

Responsibilities

- Reviewing a selection of complaint and conduct-related cases to ensure that the Force's policies and procedures comply with current legislation, regulations and statutory guidance, and are applied consistently, fairly, transparently and proportionately.
- Examine complaint reviews as undertaken by the OPCC to ensure these are thorough, professional and in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Scrutinising performance data and assurance information to verify that the Force has an effective system for reporting and monitoring complaints and conduct matters.
- Regularly identifying recurring patterns or themes across complaints, conduct cases and other relevant sources of insight, to highlight key areas for focus.
- Promoting organisational learning by triangulating findings from complaints, misconduct outcomes, internal concerns, audits and inspections.
- Assessing whether learning identified by the Force and OPCC is translated into effective action, including changes to policy, training, supervision or practice.
- Evaluating the impact of actions taken to address identified issues, and consider whether they are appropriate and effective.

- Reviewing the time taken by TVP to finalise complaints and recommending measures to improve timeliness if necessary.
- Assessing the regularity and quality of communications made with complainants during the complaints process to ensure compliance with IOPC statutory guidance.
- Scrutinising outcomes and processes for individuals and groups with protected characteristics (as defined by the Equality Act 2010), including identifying and challenging disproportionality, bias or potential discrimination.
- Requesting and reviewing disaggregated data where appropriate to support evidence-based scrutiny of fairness and equality.
- Reviewing the underlying policies and procedures that underpin behaviours and standards, including cultural drivers influencing behaviour and standards.
- Make recommendations to the PCC and CC via the Trust and Confidence Tactical and Strategic Boards (TCTB and TCSB) to improve processes, outcomes, organisational learning and public trust.
- Consider specific matters referred to the Committee (including from internal or external assurance bodies) and make relevant recommendations where appropriate.

Governance

1. This Committee has been established in partnership with the CC of TVP and the PCC for Thames Valley.
2. Gillian Ormston, OPCC Chief Executive serves as senior responsible owner for this scrutiny committee. ACC Dennis Murray is the TVP senior operational lead for TVP in this area, with operational accountability including resourcing, and any actions following Committee feedback.
3. With the Committee's agreement, the PCC may attend Committee sessions, and assist in escalating issues. The PCC's role, and involvement in the scrutiny process should be agreed upon by the Committee Chair/members, PCC, and the CC/Force.
4. The TCTB is responsible for any actions following a Committee session and its feedback. Matters raised may be referred to the PCC/CC for a decision and the TCTB will ensure a final response is communicated back to the Committee at the earliest opportunity.

5. No subgroups may be established by this Committee without the express permission of the TCSB. Any such requests must be documented in the meeting records, which will be submitted to the TCSB after the meeting.
6. All members must familiarise themselves with and adhere to the Terms of Reference, including all relevant legal requirements (e.g. GDPR, Confidentiality, Code of Ethics)

Committee Membership

1. The Committee's membership should reflect the demographics of the local community, with all members residing, working or studying within the Thames Valley area.
2. The Committee ideally include:
 - Statutory or established scrutineers (e.g. members of other scrutiny groups)
 - Experts with experience in the criminal justice system
 - Community representatives, including those with lived experience of police interactions
 - Police representatives (including those representing protected characteristics and trainers)
3. The OPCC/Force should ensure that the inclusion of the above members does not compromise the representation of other groups or individuals with protected characteristics, such as defined under the Equality Act 2010.
4. Members are expected to attend meetings regularly (either in person or online) and contribute to discussions objectively and constructively.
5. Members must behave respectfully and inclusively, fostering a safe environment for attendees from diverse backgrounds. They must also adhere to the Code of Ethics & Nolan Principles of Public Life.
6. Members should disclose any conflicts of interest early on and understand that they may need to withdraw from certain parts of the meeting.
7. To ensure transparency and public confidence, the Committee should elect an independent Chair.
8. With the Committee's agreement, the PCC, deputy or an OPCC representative may attend meetings in an advisory capacity, and to address feedback and actions.

9. Members may not sit on more than one body in the same tier (i.e. Strategic, Force, Local Command Tier), though they may participate in groups across different tiers. Refer to the Handbook for Scrutiny & Advisory Groups for guidance.
10. Membership tenure is set at a 4-year term, maximum of 8 years.
11. The Chair's tenure is set at a 2-year term, with a maximum 4 years.

Vetting

1. All members of the Committee, including the Chair will be vetted to Non-Police Personnel Vetting level 2, abbreviated (NPPV2 abbrev)
2. The Force and the OPCC will ensure that vetting protocols do not unfairly discriminate against individuals who would otherwise be able to participate in Committee sessions. Where their participation would be valuable to the scrutiny process, the OPCC and Force will consider alternative arrangements to assist with their involvement, should vetting result in any concerns.
3. The Force/OPCC will clearly explain to applicants what the vetting process involves, including an explanation of why vetting is necessary (i.e. to maintain confidentiality and data handling requirements).

Committee Scope

1. The scope of the Committee will be determined in accordance with a programme of work agreed with the TCTB.
2. The Committee's remit extends beyond complaints handling to include broader scrutiny of professional standards, organisational learning and continuous improvement.
3. The Committee may consider a range of information sources, including but not limited to:
 - Public complaints
 - Complaint review decisions
 - Internal conduct matters (at a thematic level)
 - Misconduct and gross misconduct outcomes
 - Internal reporting mechanisms (e.g. grievances or speak-up concerns, where appropriate)
 - Audit, inspection and assurance findings
 - Performance and disproportionality data

4. Data showing evidence of disproportionality will form a core part of the Committee's focus.
5. The Committee will place particular focus on:
 - Identifying systemic or recurring issues
 - Understanding root causes of poor outcomes or dissatisfaction
 - Scrutinising fairness, consistency and proportionality
 - Examining issues relating to protected characteristics and disproportionality
 - Assessing whether organisational learning is embedded and effective
6. The Committee may request additional data, insight or explanation from the Force or OPCC to support its scrutiny, within agreed governance and legal constraints.
7. The Committee may undertake thematic or 'deep dive' reviews into specific areas of concern to provide more detailed scrutiny and recommendations.
8. The Committee will operate as an independent scrutiny and advisory body, providing challenge, assurance and recommendations, but not carrying out investigations or inspections.

Limits of Committee Scope

1. The Committee's remit is confined to scrutinising current processes and procedures. While the Committee will review examples of these in practice, it does not have the authority to adjudicate on individual complaints.
2. The Committee has no jurisdiction in law to determine the legality or safety of a case, and does not participate in formal complaints or legal processes.
3. The Committee does not possess statutory powers or legal functions, nor does it have the authority to alter the outcome of a case. Although Committee feedback may highlight concerns for the PCC or CC to consider, it will not change the original decision of a case.

Ways of Working

Meetings

1. The Committee will meet quarterly.
2. Wherever possible meetings should take place in person, however all in-person meetings should also be available for attendance via MS Teams where appropriate. The timing, location and duration of meetings should be considered with the aim of making them as accessible as possible to the widest range of members.

3. Administrative support will be provided for the Committee by the Force / OPCC. This will include organisation of the venue, minute-taking, circulation of agendas, minutes and any other relevant data to all members. Meeting minutes will be distributed within 10 working days of the meeting.
4. Standing Agenda Items:
 - Welcome and Apologies
 - Review of previous minutes/actions;
 - Update from Chairperson's Forum
 - Review and discussion of data scrutinised
 - Documents for Approval/Review/Discussion (when necessary)
 - Next meeting plan
 - AOB & Key Messages

Data Handling

1. The OPCC in conjunction with the Force is responsible for selecting, securing and sanitising all data supplied to the Committee.
2. All Committee members must adhere to disclosure, General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) protocols and Force guidance.
3. The Force and OPCC should ensure that all data is handled and reviewed in line with the national [Authorised Professional Practice \(APP\) guidance](#) where applicable.
4. All confidentiality requirements, data protection or other legal requirements should be clearly explained and provided to all Committee members (including remote attendees) in advance. Signed confidentiality agreements should be obtained on confirmation of recruitment.
5. Data selection is undertaken via the following process:
 - Data theme is agreed within the group – e.g. Lack of Empathy
 - Number of cases per member is agreed between PSD and OPCC to balance a broad range of scrutiny
 - PSD supplies case numbers within agreed date parameters e.g. Informal Complaints with a local factor of Lack of Empathy closed within the last 6 months, plus Formal Complaints with the same local factor closed within the last 12 months
 - OPCC will order the cases in numerical order and then select cases according to the highest numerical factor. E.g. on a list of 269 cases where 12 are required, every 22nd case will be selected.
 - Data will be retrieved and redacted for the selected cases and made available to members via a secure method agreed by TVP / OPCC.

6. Planned schedule for scrutiny is:

- Cases for scrutiny to be supplied to committee members with 5 weeks after a meeting
- Timeline for scrutiny completion and forms to be submitted is 4 weeks from receipt

Outputs

1. Committee findings should be recorded at each meeting on feedback forms and presented to the next meeting of the TCTB or TCSB in a clear, structured format that enables effective action, accountability and tracking of outcomes.
2. The recommendations will also be communicated to the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC), the PCC and CC.
3. The TCTB or TCSB will review the Committee's findings and recommendations and determine appropriate actions. These may include policy reviews, amendments to procedures, feedback to staff, training interventions, supervisory actions, or wider improvement initiatives to support a culture of continuous organisational learning.
4. The Committee will maintain oversight of a structured action tracker or learning log, capturing:
 - Issues identified
 - Recommendations made
 - Agreed actions and responsible owners
 - Expected outcomes or success measures
 - Progress updates and completion status
5. The Committee will periodically review this tracker to assess whether actions have been implemented effectively and whether they have resulted in meaningful and sustained improvement.
6. The Committee will seek assurance that learning identified through complaints, conduct matters and other sources is embedded within the organisation, including through policy, training, supervision and cultural change.
7. Where recurring or unresolved issues are identified, the Committee will escalate concerns to the TCTB and may make further recommendations.
8. To maximise transparency, and where appropriate, the OPCC will publicise the Committee's findings.

9. The TCTB will report back to the Committee on actions taken in response to its recommendations, including evidence of implementation and impact, ensuring a closed feedback loop.
10. The Committee may consider the response and make further recommendations if they remain dissatisfied.

Updates drafted with assistance from MS Copilot 15/5/26.