

Joint Audit and Standards Committee
20 April 2020

Standards Update

1. Overview of Governance and Scrutiny Processes

1.1 There are 3 key strategic meetings through which the PCC and Chief Officers exercise governance and scrutiny of the Professional Standards Department (PSD) and wider standards and ethics agenda:

- The Fairness, Policy and Standards Delivery Group;
- The Internal Ethics Committee; and
- The PCC – PSD Quarterly Performance meeting.

1.2 A brief update from each meeting has been provided as part of this paper.

2. Fairness, Policy and Standards Meeting

2.1 The last Fairness, Policy and Standards meeting was held on 6th January 2020.

2.2 The agenda included an overview of HMICFRS legitimacy recommendations, PSD performance, stop and search, use of force and grievances.

2.3 Following direction from Chief Officers, from 1st May 2020, the Fairness, Policy and Standards Delivery Board will be absorbed into a new, all day People Delivery Group Meeting. This part of the meeting will be chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable (DCC).

2.4 The terms of reference for the People Delivery Board are being developed and attendees reviewed to ensure a more focussed meeting. The policy lead from the PCC's office will attend the meeting to ensure full oversight of all workforce matters, including standards, is maintained.

3. Internal Ethics Committee

3.1 A West Mercia-specific Internal Ethics Committee was established in December 2019.

3.2 The committee has since developed a revised Terms of Reference which outlines the purpose, objectives, membership and administration of the group.

- 3.3 Whilst a member of the JASC previously attended the alliance Internal Ethics Committee, the new West Mercia meeting is currently attended by the PCC's policy lead for standards and ethics. Quarterly updates will be provided to the JASC through this paper.
- 3.4 In line with best practice, the committee has elected an interim independent Chair from the University of Worcester. The Head of PSD, Supt. Becky Love, has been elected as the interim Vice-Chair.
- 3.5 Going forward, each committee meeting will involve review of an ethical dilemma that has been submitted by an officer or member of staff. The methodology for the submission of, and response to ethical dilemmas is currently being developed based on regional and national best practice.

4. Quarterly PSD Performance Meeting

- 4.1 On a quarterly basis, the Deputy PCC has a performance meeting with the Head of PSD and the Senior Complaints and Misconduct Manager.
- 4.2 During this meeting, PSD present performance data for all key performance indicators (KPIs) as set nationally by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), including:
- Volume of complaint and conduct matters;
 - Timeliness of recording complaints;
 - Timeliness of resolving complaints (with / without investigation);
 - Recorded conduct breaches by allegation category;
 - Misconduct and gross misconduct outcomes.
- 4.3 The last meeting took place on 28th February 2020, covering the period 1st April 2019 – 31st December 2019 (Q1 – Q3 19/20) in line with IOPC quarterly reporting.
- 4.4 Performance against KPIs including timeliness of recording, timeliness of local resolutions and timeliness of local investigations, has improved compared to 2018/19 and is better than the national average.
- 4.5 There has been a considerable reduction in the number of allegations per 1,000 employees this year compared to the same period in 2018/19. This has been attributed to the introduction of the triage function within PSD.
- 4.6 There has been a small increase in recorded conduct matters (from 31 to 42 cases). Whilst the increase has been partially attributed to individual officers, there are no wider trends in relation to allegations or geographical area.

- 4.7 The performance meeting is also an opportunity to discuss emerging trends or issues. Over the last 12 months in particular, the meeting has been utilised to understand the impact of local changes (e.g. the alliance) and preparedness for national changes (e.g. the new regulations implemented on 1st February 2020).
- 4.8 At the meeting in February, the Head of PSD provided an update on recruitment across the department including vetting. Following the transition to a standalone PSD function in October 2019, West Mercia were carrying 20 vacancies. As of March 2020, there remain only 3.5 vacancies (2 x police staff investigators, 1 x vetting admin, 0.5 vetting case officer).
- 4.9 The Head of PSD also shared a presentation approved at the force's Exec Board which set out the department's revised strategic aims. The aims reflect the intent of the new complaints and conduct regulations, with a focus on organisational learning.

5. Dip Sampling

- 5.1 Dip sampling of finalised complaints was previously undertaken by independent members appointed to the PCC's Trust, Integrity and Ethics (TIE) committee.
- 5.2 The TIE committee was disbanded in July 2018 and the decision was taken to incorporate its functions into the Alliance Joint Audit Committee (to be renamed Joint Audit and Standards Committee).
- 5.3 An initial dip sampling session was undertaken by Alliance JASC members on 14th June 2019. However no further dip sampling sessions were scheduled due the requirement to establish a separate JASC for each force.
- 5.4 The future role of the West Mercia JASC in standards and ethics, and the value of dip sampling complaints must be considered by the PCC, Chief Constable and members going forward.

6. PCC Review Function.

- 6.1 As this function is still in its infancy (0 reviews to date), there is no further update to that provided to members on 26th February 2020. It is anticipated that a comprehensive update will be provided for the next meeting