

Mike Short
Chair, Dorset Police and Crime Panel
Dorset County Council
County Hall
Dorset
DT1 1XJ

13 June 2018

Dear Mike

LUSH: 'PAID TO LIE' CAMPAIGN

I am aware that a small number of complaints have been received by the Police and Crime Panel following my recent comments on the Lush 'Paid to Lie' campaign. My Chief Executive is managing these complaints, and will respond to you and Panel officials shortly.

In the interim, I wanted to write to you to set out some of my thinking around the campaign, and the wider issues it raised.

Firstly, let me be absolutely clear, I have nothing but the utmost respect for the officers, staff and volunteers of Dorset Police. As an ex-officer, they have my support, my admiration and my gratitude for the incredibly difficult job they do.

I know this poorly thought through campaign has upset some staff, and that is completely understandable. I accept that I did not make my feelings about the delivery of the campaign clear enough in my initial statement and I have apologised to staff for that. To be clear, I do not condone the way in which the campaign has been portrayed to the public – indeed, I called it "clumsy and offensive to Policing UK" the same day it was launched in a BBC TV interview. Unfortunately, that piece of the interview did not make the final cut.

I have not condemned the campaign outright because to do so lessens the importance of its message. I would support any company or individual who raised genuine concerns about the Special Demonstration Squad and its tactics. In fact, I met with Mike Penning, then Policing Minister, in November 2014 to raise these issues myself as I feel strongly about the actions of a small group of undercover officers (the SDS) who abused their position over several years.

I have been asked why I chose to comment on this issue at all. I have previously published that my election campaign received a personal donation from the founder of Lush. Lush is a Dorset based company and for these reasons the media, officers, staff and Dorset residents quite rightly asked me to make comment. I can confirm that at no point did Lush, or any representatives of Lush, ask me to comment.

Finally, you are aware that I recently made a statement to staff in response to this campaign. I had a planned meeting today with Anna Harvey, the Chair of Dorset Police Federation. She mentioned that this message was well received by her members, and that this issue has not been raised to her further.

Ultimately it is difficult to comment on something that I did not know about prior to its launch. It is similarly difficult to provide a clear-cut position on complex matters. I mention this, not as an excuse for providing a watered down response, but as an insight into my position of being receptive to the issues raised by Lush, and simultaneously disappointed in the manner by which the campaign has been conducted.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martyn Underhill', with a small horizontal line at the end.

Martyn Underhill
Police and Crime Commissioner for Dorset