

Police and Crime Panel – 6th February 2026

Public Participation – Question submitted by Mr Mark Ellis

Question: “Dorset Police refuse to accept and address complaints against Dorset Police’s own officers and staff. The OPCC does not accept direct complaints against Dorset Police’s refusal to police, and complaints against behaviour of Dorset Police (Including the behaviour of Professional Standards team).

What actions has the Commissioner taken to investigate the whole complaint handling process of Dorset Police and hold the Chief Constable to account for training across the force”

Response by the PCC

Like all forces, Dorset Police is required to handle complaints received from the public. Save for certain circumstances - for instance the most serious complaints which are dealt with by the IOPC - the regulations state that complaints against police officers and staff must be dealt with by the Force. In other words, my Office is therefore not able to record or investigate complaints about Dorset Police officers and staff, as it is not within my remit. My Office does, however, deal with the majority of appeals, or reviews as they are known – again, in line with the relevant laws and procedures.

As this Panel has heard previously, there is a rigorous programme of scrutiny that covers the complaints process. In addition to the reviews undertaken by the Complaints Review Officer, complaints materials are subject to additional enquiry at my Use of Police Powers and Standards Scrutiny Panel – at which complaints data and processes are scrutinised by myself and independent volunteers. This includes a regular dip-sampling of Force complaints to ensure that good standards are present and that policies are being followed. Summaries of the Scrutiny Panel meetings are published on my website.

My Director of Operations also attends the Force Standards and Ethics Board, at which Force level service is discussed, and holds regular meetings with the Head of Professional Standards to best understand the complaint handling processes and ensure that strong levels of customer service are maintained.

The Director of Operations is also a member of the Organisational Learning Board and Legitimacy Board so that my Office can be assured that lessons are learned, and that training picks up areas that can be improved upon. Myself and the Director of Operations also meet with IOPC representatives to understand any national trends and, alongside the information available to us locally, ensure that Dorset Police’s complaints performance compares well with other similar force areas.