

Notice of Outcome of Police Misconduct Hearing

(Regulation 43 Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020)

CHAIRPERSON'S ACCOUNT

Officer concerned: Police Constable Stephen COTGREAVE

Date of hearing: Monday 18th November 2024

Name of person chairing: Harry IRELAND

Name of panel members:

Assessor – Det Supt Matt PILCH

IPM – Amanda Harvey

The Decisions of the Hearing

Allegation

Between 6th December 2022 and 14th December 2022, whilst on duty, PC Stephen Cotgreave was dishonest when accounting for a lost 9mm round to his supervisors.

Finding

Proven / Not Proven

Proven

Outcome

Dismissal Without Notice

Background

The officer had previously accepted the allegation and admitted misconduct only. This was reiterated before the Panel. Therefore, no evidence was heard save for the CCTV evidence being played.

Following the opening on behalf of the AA, we received submissions on the officer's behalf as to the level of severity (Misconduct only) and sanction. Given the officers' admissions it was agreed by all parties that the process normally dealt with separately was combined.

Findings on Gross Misconduct/Misconduct

The officer having admitted that he breached the Standard of Honesty and Integrity we found that this amounted to Gross Misconduct.

Finding on outcome, including any aggravating or mitigating factors affecting the seriousness of the failures in standards

Conclusion

The purpose of the misconduct hearing is threefold:

Firstly, to protect the public confidence in and the reputation of policing.

Secondly, to maintain the high professional standards by demonstrating to other officers that misconduct will not be tolerated.

Thirdly, to protect the public and/or officers and staff by preventing the officers from committing similar misconduct again.

In determining the appropriate sanction, we took into account the following matters:

CULPABILITY

- Culpability is high. There was intentional and deliberate course of conduct, ignoring a number of opportunities to admit the loss of the bullet from his weapon.
- There was a risk to the welfare of the public and the Royal Household given that a live round had been lost by the officer which should have led to an immediate and full search of the area which was within his knowledge.
- Whilst undertaking duties of an officer he was, by the very nature of his role, in a position of trust owing especial care to the public, the Royal Household and his colleagues. This he ignored.
- Whilst not operational dishonesty, it was dishonesty over a period of one week while in the course of his specific duties as a member of the Royal and Specialist Protection unit.

HARM

- Such behaviour could undermine the good order of policing and thus is high.
- The potential harm should a live round find its way into the wrong hands.

AGGRAVATING FACTORS.

- Abuse of trust particularly as an AFO working in the Royal Household.
- Concealing wrongdoing over 8 days.
- Sustained dishonesty over the course of one week, lying to fellow officers on 3 occasions despite being given the opportunity to admit his mistake.
- Continuing his behaviour when it should have been obvious to the officer that it was dishonest and thus improper. The officer was on leave for 4 days following 6 December left the officer plenty of time for reflection and assisting the recovery of the bullet, an opportunity he failed to take.

MITIGATING FACTORS:

- Admissions at a relatively early stage, albeit this must be balanced by the fact that this was only forthcoming once overwhelming evidence against the officer was found, i.e. the CCTV evidence.
- Evidence of remorse and acceptance of responsibility.
- He has skills which are valuable to the Service and the public.

- The officer has continued in his role, albeit without a firearm, throughout the proceedings.

We acknowledge the risk of 'double counting' in assessing the above factors and have taken this into account.

As a result of this misconduct hearing the following was found and imposed with effect from today:

Dismissal without notice.

Decision on publication

The decision can be published.