

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY
HELD THURSDAY, 11TH JUNE, 2020 AT CHURCH HOUSE, 90 DEANSGATE, MANCHESTER, M3 2GH**

GMCA/1/20 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed members of the Independent Police Ethics Committee (ETHICS COMMITTEE) to the meeting. Particular welcome was given to the new members of the Committee – Dane Anderton, Maneer Afsar, Dr Iestyn Shapey and Victoria Yates.

GMCA/2/20 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

GMCA/3/20 Minutes from the Previous Meeting Held on 19 December 2019 and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2019 were submitted for approval.

In terms of matters arising – all actions had either been completed or had been included on the work plan for going forward.

The Chair had met with a representative from GMP Professional Standards Branch (PSB) about the possibilities of them inaugurating an internal ethics committee in line with national standards. A meeting had taken place with DS Melanie Hall from the PSB to explain the work of this Committee and gauge her feelings about what she would like to see in terms of an internal committee. This had been a fruitful discussion and DS Hall would be invited to the next meeting to give her a flavor of the types of discussions taking place in the Independent Ethics Committee.

An update was provided following a previous question on information retained on protestors and shared with other agencies such as the Department of Work & Pensions – particularly after concerns raised following fracking protests. It was confirmed that it was not routine to share information gathered during protests – and that no information had been shared with other agencies at either the protests against the Conservative Party Conference or the Extinction Rebellion marches. It was advised that if information were ever to be shared with other agencies, there would need to be an absolute clear, legitimate and ethical reason for doing so.

GMCA/4/20 Introductions and Overview of the Work Undertaken Over the Last 12 Months

For the benefit of the new members of the Committee – a report was provided which provided them with a summary of the thematic areas considered by the Committee over the past few years.

This included the work undertaken in relation to body worn video; the use of Tasers; human tissue retention; the vetting of careers in the police service; management of large scale events; and the use of spit guards.

BOLTON
BURY

MANCHESTER
OLDHAM

ROCHDALE
SALFORD

STOCKPORT
TAMESIDE

TRAFFORD
WIGAN

Black Lives Matter

Given recent developments on the international stage – the Chair asked that Police representatives provide the Committee with an update on the ongoing response to Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests.

GMP were appalled by the event that had initially transpired in the USA and there was an understanding of the social movement that had built in response to this. The movement had now broadened beyond concerns about whether black and minority ethnic people are treated fairly by the police into a wider debate about treatment in society as a whole.

CC Ian Hopkins was the lead on the National Police Chiefs Council for Diversity and had formed part of a small group who had put together an official statement. The Statement had raised concerns about holding marches at a time of unprecedented health emergency issues – but given that government guidelines were in the process of being loosened at this time – GMP representatives had sought to talk to the organisers of the GM BLM protests to agree a best way to conduct marches in as safe a way as possible. Therefore, when CC Hopkins wrote a statement to all GMP staff, he elected to omit the criticism of holding these protests in the current climate.

There had been disturbances resulting in violence and civil disorder in some parts of the country, including attacks on police officers. The agreed approach in Manchester however resulted in no arrests, with the nature of the police presence being well received and police observers providing positive feedback. It was expected that some further protests would take place, though not at the scale of the initial march.

A race equality body had already been in the pipeline – but given the events, the arrangements for this were now being accelerated, with a task and finish group taking place to help move towards the establishment of the body more quickly. It was also intended that a quarterly race equality report would be produced by GMP taking into account statistics on the use of force.

There was an understandable rise in anger within the communities after the international events, and this had been approached in a diligent ethical manner. There was also a need however, to take note of how GMP staff themselves were feeling following the incidents, and this made for a more complicated picture. These were times of heightened tension that street officers had to deal with on a day-in day-out basis – how could open, honest and meaningful conversations take place without a reluctance to take on board critical feedback – this with particularity pertinent in relation to BAME staff, who may also be dealing with the disproportionate impacts of Covid-19 seen in the community.

There was concern about a far right reaction to the marches taking place with counter-protests – and some seeing it as their ‘responsibility’ now to protect statues and memorials.

With all of the above in mind, assistance from the Ethics Committee going forward would be welcome. Given the need for expedited discussion on the topic – it was suggested that this could take place as a dial in call for those available initially rather than the delays inherent in the establishment of a formal sub-committee.

Comments and Questions

It was commented that having an unarmed police force in the UK was welcome – as the proliferation of guns on the persons of both the police and the public in the USA led to heightened tensions fuelled by fear and suspicion.

A question was raised about how Covid-19 had impacted upon decisions taken and would the policing approach change if the 'R' number was to rise? It was stated that the marches were clearly in breach of the social distancing conditions at that time, however, an approach in which working with the organisers to appeal for social distancing at the events was the most cohesive approach – this paid off with most at the march wearing protective masks. With regard to the R-value – the experts would need to be listened to, but regardless of the R rating at the time of the protests – they were inevitable regardless of the approach.

A question was raised about the collection of data for the race equality panel. Would there be a benefit in comparing this data against those of benchmark authorities? It was advised that the data would be scrupulously reviewed to ensure it was sound, and the work of other authorities would be monitored to see if it was comparable.

There was concern that within a few months the incident would be essentially forgotten. What could be done about inequality seen in terms of GMP – and how the ethics committee could continue to consider these issues to ensure equality in the long-term. There was a need to be a friend and not an enemy of the community - and there was a role for the ethics committee in looking at the inequalities that could exacerbate a combative atmosphere. Were levels of BAME applications to the police force improving? Moreover, what could be done to encourage this if not? It was considered that these were issues that may need to be revisited.

It was advised that the proportion of BAME officers had doubled from 4 to 8% - so it was moving in the right direction – however, this was still only half of the 16% BAME population within GM.

It was queried whether there were other metrics that could provide value other than recruitment alone in undertaking evaluation. These could include, career progression and staff retention.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the Chair would liaise with GMP officers in regards to ethics committee advice on Black Lives Matter protests and associated issues.

GMCA/5/20 Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

A presentation was provided to the Committee on the Independent Custody Visiting Scheme (ICV), which ensured that police custody suites properly ensured the rights, entitlements and wellbeing of detainees being held there. The presentation went into detail about the GM approach to ICV

Comments and Questions

It was queried whether ethnicity was considered as part of the piece – and whether feedback about detainment was different depending on the ethnicity of the detainee?

There was concern that so few detainees had accepted a visit – was there a way for detainees to understand the opportunities open to them in a visit. It was advised that when a person was arrested they had the right to see the custody visitor codes of practice, though understandably this was rarely taken up. There were also posters around the cell area. The codes of practice also allowed for self-introduction, where custody visitors could explain about their role in person – this self-introduction approach often resulted in higher uptake.

It was suggested that information within the cells could be helpful in increasing uptake. This would be taken up with the custody branches.

It was asked whether training for the custody visitor roles included sensitivity training around BAME detainees – and equally detainees with health/mental health issues. It was confirmed that this did form part of the training programme for ICV's – who had to undertake six courses related to such sensitivities over an initial six month period – if this was not undertaken the ICV's could potentially have an extended probation. This training had to be refreshed every two years.

Further enquiries were made into detainees who had declined interviews – was there more granularity available on why they had specifically declined to take these up? It was advised that there were a number of factors – sometimes it was how the opportunity was 'sold' to the detainee – with the tone of introduction often having an impact. Sometimes it was just a case that detainees felt they would be 'held up' in the cells longer by consenting to interviews. It was again agreed that education literature on this could help.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the ICV presentation be noted.
2. That the Volunteers Manager be asked to contact custody branches regarding the feasibility of having ICV literature in cells.

GMCA/6/20 Communications Strategy Update

There had been a number of back office changes to the communications team towards the end of 2019, which had hindered some of the progress on the strategy; this had however now been resolved. Within the report was a six-month plan – with it being hoped that the communications activity could begin around July/August 2020, as at the present time staff were mostly engaged on Covid-19 related work.

A press release had been drafted for publication the day after the meeting that would announce the new members of the Ethics Committee; and the 'vox pops' that had been filmed at the previous meeting were being finalised and edited before sharing.

A proposal had been included in the papers about the production of public information videos. Committee. Following discussions with colleagues in the communications team, it was

likely that there would be a need to source an external agency to produce them, dependent on resources and budget. It was proposed that the video be around 5 minutes in length. It would begin by explaining the principle of the Committee; a general overview of the membership and how to get involved; what the Committee considered together with some (illustrated if possible) example; a brief view from GMP and a closing summary from the Deputy Mayor linking back to the principles highlighted at the outset.

Comments and Questions

Clarity was sought on the cost of using an external agency. It was confirmed that it would cost approximately £4,000, which would come out of the PCC funding.

It was suggested that a delay of a few weeks arising from using internal staff would be acceptable rather than fielding an extra expense by producing the video externally.

It was requested that the communications team be allowed flexibility to send externally should it be found that the communications team continue to have resourcing issues due to the demands of the Covid-19 response.

This was agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the report on the progress made on the communications strategy for the Ethics Committee be received.
2. That should the Communications Team need to arrange for an external company to produce the supporting video due to resourcing pressures – they will liaise with the Chair for agreement.

GMCA/7/20 Committee Governance / Work Plan

The recruitment process had been a success – over 100 expressions of interest had been received with 38 fully completed applications received from a wide mix of backgrounds. Members were thanked again for their support in the development of the recruitment pack.

The Committee Work Plan would be updated with further items following the discussions at the meeting.

From the existing Work Plan – there had been a lot of interest in custody suites and the availability of Dr Leila Skinnis was being looked into for her to address the Committee on her research work around police detention.

An updated position was not available on clocks in custody at present. It was agreed that an update would be brought when there was further information of substance to consider.

Comments and Questions

It was queried whether the Committee needed to take a more proactive approach to developments around Black Lives Matter. For example, should Stop and Search Policies be revisited – and should recruitment be considered further?

It was agreed that a scoping exercise would take place over the next few weeks – Cym D'Souza, Maneer Asfar & Iestyn Shapey would liaise with Ian Pilling to consider this further.

Reference was made to the estates strategy and whether there was merit in the Committee considering this – it was agreed that this would be picked up at an appropriate point.

Discussion took place regarding the Committee's role in assisting live operations. Members agreed that they could continue to provide value with their input. It was asked that when Members were asked to input into operations – that formal reports be brought back to the Committee detailing when these had happened.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the closing off of the recruit process be agreed
2. That officers seek to invite Dr Leila Skinns to a future meeting of the Committee
3. That reports on clock in custody only be brought to the Committee when a substantive update can be provided.
4. That a scoping exercise on Black Lives Matter be arranged to involve members as listed above.
5. That a report on the estates strategy be brought to the Committee at an appropriate point.
6. That Ethics Committee Members continue to be invited to be involved in operational matters where deemed appropriate.

GMCA/8/20 Response to Covid-19

The Chair had been approached by the Chief Constable of GMP to Chair a specific ethics panel looking at the policing of the Covid-19 lockdown as a national piece of work. The terms of reference had been agreed last week and the membership was due to be drawn up on 12th June. It had been agreed that a small national group would be best place to undertake this work rather than it going through the numerous regional committees.

It was raised that the public do not really see that the police are working with independent ethical panels on such decisions. The Chair would take consideration of how to better publicise the work back to the Panel for discussion.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the Committee note the establishment of a national Covid-19 Ethics Panel to be chaired by Bishop David Walker.

GMCA/9/20 Reflections and Any Other Business

RESOLVED/-

1. That the Committee agrees to the sign off of the Committee Terms of Reference.