

Request for a Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner Decision

SECTION 1

Please identify who is requesting the decision:			
OPFCC Decision	Y	Decision Number:	PF xxxx/yyyy
CCFRA Decision	N	Decision Number:	CF xxxx/yyyy
Constabulary Decision	N	Decision Number:	CC xxxx/yyyy

(Please indicate whether this is a PART 1 or PART 2 decision (For Part 2 decisions, only the Section 1 is to be published))

PART 1 Decision:		PART 2 Decision:	✓
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DECISION TITLE: Complaint Handling Business Case

Executive Summary:

The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Cumbria (PFCC) is committed to improving the service Cumbria Constabulary delivers to its diverse communities, and views the complaints and compliments received as an essential barometer in understanding how well policing is being delivered, and most importantly, in improving service both individually and collectively.

Following a change in legislation in 2017 Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) can take a more active role in the police complaints process.

According to the published IOPC data, Cumbria Constabulary had been taking twice as long to finalise complaints outside of Schedule 3 than its Most Similar Force average and the national average and was on a worsening trajectory. Whilst improving significantly over recent months, that has been at the expense of timeliness of handling complaints under Schedule 3.

There has been very little organisational learning from any complaint dealt with outside of Schedule 3 in the last year or two; and those were in the last quarter. The proportion of completed complaints that are subject to a Review has been consistently higher than both the Most Similar Force and national averages throughout 2023 and 2024.

The Chief Constable has recently reviewed the resourcing and processes applied to matters currently under their responsibilities. That review did not address the customer service-related cultural and organisational learning issues addressed in this review.

It is proposed that a new complaints function will be split across an Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC)-based complaint resolution function (CRF) and Professional Standards Department (PSD). The CRF would be the principal gateway for all expressions of appreciation and dissatisfaction coming into the force, registering and understanding the feedback, fact checking and resolving complaints at the earliest possible opportunity, passing complaints onto PSD where appropriate and necessary, proactively thanking the workforce when necessary, and supporting Cumbria Constabulary in learning, improving and driving best value from public feedback.

No changes are proposed to the mechanisms for handling complaints, conduct matters and Death or Serious Injury (DSI) matters, and for the carrying out of investigations under Schedule 3 of the Police Reform Act 2002 as amended. These must remain the responsibility of the Chief Constable, the PFCC (if the Chief Constable is the subject of the complaint), and the IOPC, as set out in that Schedule. Neither are there any changes proposed for handling Complaint Reviews.

There is a need to ensure future complaints teams adopt a constructive, customer-centric culture and approach to resolving complaints. The legislation facilitates a focus on the person and the complaint rather than on the complaints system, and customer service should be central to any organisational culture.

The Business case considers the various factors necessary for dealing with complaints outside of Schedule 3 effectively and efficiently, with a view to improving public and police confidence in the system and organisational development and learning, supporting the Constabulary on its continuous improvement journey. Patterns of communication and control relating to complaints outside of Schedule 3 are set out, so the proposed system can be managed effectively.

Recommendation:

The Commissioner is asked to:

- a. Create a new capability responsible for logging and resolving complaints outside of Schedule 3 and enabling organisational learning. This capability should undertake the initial handling of all public correspondence on behalf of the PFCC, and not just complaints. This team will develop and maintain a constructive, collaborative relationship with PSD with robust and transparent working arrangements between the two.
- b. Transfer responsibility for the initial part of the complaints handling process to the PFCC (Option 2).
- c. Manage the transition from the current to the new arrangements by retaining and completing complaints received under the current arrangements through those existing systems. Complaints received from a set go-live date would be dealt with under the new system.
- d. Utilise Centurion as the initial IT system.
- e. Develop a detailed implementation project plan covering:
 - Team and pan-Force Culture
 - Staffing and training

- Improved processes for complaint handling, information management and disseminating organisational learning, including performance metrics and organisational learning policies and products.
- ICT
- Accommodation

f. Develop a formal communications strategy.

g. Commence implementation immediately following approval.


Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner

I confirm that I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for Cumbria Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner. Any such interests are recorded below.

I hereby:	approve	the recommendations as set out above.

Delete as appropriate:

Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner / Chief Executive (delete as appropriate)

Signature: 

Date: 24/11/25

For OPFCC Office Use only:

Date of publication of decision:	
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Each section below must be completed prior to submission to the Commissioner for decision.

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

I confirm that this report has been considered by the Chief Officer Group / OPFCC Executive Team / CCFRA Executive Team and that relevant financial, legal and equalities advice has been taken into account in the preparation of this report.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

CHIEF OFFICER APPROVAL (where applicable)

Chief Constable / Chief Fire Officer (delete as appropriate)

I have been consulted about the proposal and confirm that I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

OPFCC CHIEF OFFICER APPROVAL

Chief Executive (Monitoring Officer) / Chief Finance Officer (Deputy Chief Executive) (delete as appropriate)

I have been consulted about the proposal and confirm that financial, legal and equalities advice has been taken into account in the preparation of this report. I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner / Chief Executive (delete as appropriate).

Signature: *G Shearer* **Date:** 24/11/25

Media Strategy	
The decision taken by the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner may require a press announcement or media strategy.	
Will a press release be required following the decision being considered?	YES / NO
If yes, has a media strategy been formulated?	YES / NO
Is the media strategy attached?	YES / NO
What is the proposed date of the press release:	

Public Access to Information

Information in this form is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and other legislation. Part 1 of this form will be made available on the PFCC website within 5 working days of approval. Any facts/advice/recommendations that should not be made automatically available on request should not be included in Part 1 but instead in the Part 2 section of the form. Deferment is only applicable where release before that date would not compromise the implementation of the decision being approved.

Is the publication of this form to be deferred?	YES / NO
Until what date (if known):	
If yes, for what reason:	
If this is a Part 2 Decision , has the Part 2 element of this form been completed	YES / NO