

In the matter of the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020

and in the matter of

PC Bradley Matthews

Decision of Chief Constable Watson

Preliminary matters

1. I have today conducted an accelerated misconduct hearing at Unit A, GMP Force Headquarters, and have given consideration to various breaches of the standards of professional behaviour as pertain to PC Bradley Matthews.
2. PC Matthews attended the hearing personally and he was represented by Mr Walker, a Barrister-at-Law, and supported by Sgt Lockett of the Police Federation. In the officer's Reg 54 Response, PC Matthews has accepted that he has breached the standards of professional behaviour namely: discreditable conduct. Furthermore, he accepts that his actions amount to gross misconduct. I, having heard the evidence, and having given full consideration to all of the information provided, have determined that the breaches alleged are proven and that they amount to gross misconduct. I make it clear that my finding in this matter relates narrowly to the single case referenced within the hearing bundle and in respect of which the relevant criminal conviction was forthcoming.

3. In coming to a determination as to the most appropriate outcome, I have taken cognisance of the submissions of the appropriate authority as contained within the bundle of evidence submitted to me prior to this hearing, with elements of the same being amplified in invited verbal submissions by the representative of the Appropriate Authority, Ms Dzikira.
4. The appropriate authority has submitted that the most appropriate outcome in this matter would be that PC Matthews is dismissed without notice and that his name should be placed on the College of Policing's Barred List.
5. Mr Walker, on behalf of PC Matthews, made a number of discreet submissions which collectively underpinned the final submission which was to suggest that this instance of misconduct should be regarded as exceptional and therefore capable of being fairly resolved by means other than depriving the public of a promising officer. PC Matthews additionally made a fulsome personal statement to this hearing.
6. In determining the appropriate outcome, I have had regard to the relevant provisions of the College of Policing's guidance on outcomes in misconduct hearings. I do recognise that it does not automatically follow that where breaches of the code of conduct are found to be so serious as to justify dismissal, that dismissal can be the only sanction implied. Nevertheless, it remains very powerfully the case that the principal objective in the conduct of these hearings must be to preserve public confidence in the police service.
7. In assessing the seriousness of the misconduct found, it is a matter of fact that PC Matthews, following an off-duty altercation with a female member of the public, was convicted

of a single offence of common assault. He was given a conditional discharge for 2 years, was caused to pay costs of £620 and the victims surcharge of £26. The offence stemmed from an assault upon a person with whom PC Matthews came into contact in a late night food takeaway establishment. The circumstances of the assault were that, following a verbal interaction, PC Matthews has used an open palm with which to strike the victim in the facial area surrounding her chin.

Outcome

8. In determining the appropriate disciplinary action, I have had regard to the relevant provisions of the College of Policing's Guidance on Outcomes in Misconduct Proceedings.
9. At the forefront of my mind has been the purpose of misconduct proceedings – these are expressly set out in the College of Policing's Guidance.
10. My approach has been to "adopt" the "3 stage approach" referred to in the same guidance.
11. I have assessed the seriousness of the conduct. I consider that PC Matthews's culpability must be regarded as high. He now stands convicted of a criminal offence. Notwithstanding his having admitted to excessive consumption of alcohol, his actions were deliberate and unforced, and given his training and understanding, were carried out in the full knowledge that his conduct was patently unlawful and contrary to the very clearest corporate expectations as to the behaviours and standards required of police officers both on and off duty.

12. With regard to the aggravating factors set out in the College of Policing's Guidance, I have already pointed to the fact that the misconduct was deliberate, unforced and resulted in the infliction of an assault upon another. Whilst not an issue that PC Matthews can be held singularly accountable for, it cannot be ignored that public concern with regards the professional conduct of police officers, particularly in respect of unlawful violence, is currently both acute and pronounced.
13. In respect of harm, I refer principally to the effect of the assault in diminishing public confidence in the police. Notwithstanding the fact that PC Matthews was convicted for an offence at the lesser end of the spectrum concerning criminal assault, the circumstances surrounding his offending behaviour will give legitimate offence to the public. I am certain that the wider public hold to the notion that police officers cannot, in any circumstances, commit criminal offences themselves. The victim in this case expressed great shock, upset and physical discomfort and was clearly motivated to pursue a legitimate complaint at the earliest possible opportunity. I do not find any evidence of misogyny or other similarly sinister motivation for committing this assault upon a female. The fact remains however that the victim in this case was a woman and it cannot be dismissed as an important factor in determining the extent to which public confidence in the force will have been diminished. Violence perpetrated by a male police officer upon a woman inevitably harms public confidence in policing and understandably so.
14. With regard to mitigating circumstances, of those set out in the College of Policing's Guidance, I have taken into account PC Matthews's record of service. I have considered the very fulsome character references provided to me on PC Matthews's behalf. These references speak very positively to so much of PC

Matthews's general performance, standards and values. Whilst these references do not serve to mitigate the nature of the offence, they do persuade me that the assault committed by PC Matthews was wholly out of character. I will further acknowledge that it is to PC Matthews's credit that he has admitted his offence and the fact of his professional misconduct without equivocation. I have no hesitation in accepting PC Matthews apology and I consider his expressions of profound regret and remorse to be heartfelt and honestly advanced.

15. Notwithstanding all of the above, I reiterate the point that the core purpose of these proceedings is to sustain public confidence in the police. There is no doubt that the facts of this case have the obvious potential to substantially diminish public confidence. In conclusion, I consider that the level of seriousness in this case is high.
16. PC Matthews's offending behaviour was clearly unlawful, contrary to the clearest of instructions as to the standards required of our officers, and reckless as to the potential risk of inflicting more serious injury than occurred. I accept that PC Matthews appears to have developed a reputation as a decent and hardworking officer; and it is clear therefore that his misconduct represents a dramatic departure from that which those who know him best might have expected.
17. As is quite clear however, the principle concern of these hearings must be to preserve public confidence in the police. I have given thoughtful consideration to the submissions made on PC Matthews's behalf and have weighed the same very carefully in seeking to achieve a just outcome commensurate with my principle objective which is to maintain public confidence in policing. It is with an element of genuine regret, given the wasted potential of a promising officer, that I find that I am

unable to reconcile the maintenance of public confidence with doing anything other than dismissing PC Matthews without notice in these circumstances.

18. I order that PC Matthews's name be added to the College of Policing's Barred List.
19. This concludes today's hearing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Watson', with a stylized flourish above the name.

Stephen Watson QPM

Chief Constable

6th June 2024