IN THE POLICE CONDUCT PANEL

IN THE MATTER OF THE POLICE ACT 1996

AND THE POLICE CONDUCT REGULATIONS 2020(AS AMENDED)

B E T W E E N:

THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF
GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE

The Appropriate Authority

-and-

PC 06304 JOSEPH CSOLLAK

The Officer

REPORT ON OUTCOME

(Regulation 43)

In attendance

Chair:	ACO Jonathan Roy LLB (hons), Mst (Cantab)
	Independent Chair of Police Panels
IPM:	Jan Lamping
	Mansoor Shah
ILQA:	Jonathan Rees
AA Counsel:	Oliver Williamson
Officer's Counsel	Michael Rawlinson
PSD/IO	DS Oram
Hearings Manager:	DS Tony Dixon

Introduction

1. This case proceeded under the amended version of the 2020 regulations and the hearing took place on 5 and 6 October 2026. The writing of this report was delegated to Mr Jonathan Rees (Independent Legally Qualified Adviser - ILQA) but all the Panel members

have contributed to and approved the report. The report confirms their findings and decisions.

2. The AA was represented by Mr Oliver Williamson and the Officer by Mr Michael Rawlinson. PC Csollak ("the Officer") attended and gave evidence to the Panel.

Preliminary Matters

3. Prior to the hearing the Panel had read and digested the agreed bundle of documents of 48 pages, including in particular the Regulation 30 notice and the Officer's Regulation 31 response. They were also assisted by a detailed Opening Note prepared by Mr Williamson. The Panel noted the transcription of the Officer's misconduct interview, a critical part of the AA's case, was of particularly poor quality. It was declared that it had been created through use of an automated transcription technology.

4. Shortly before the hearing the Officer made an application for anonymity. The Chair received written legal advice from the ILQA and directed that the test for anonymity was not met, accordingly the public notice was published and the hearing proceeded in public. There were no observers in attendance on the first day and one observer on the second day.

5. There were no Equality Act submissions by either party, and it was agreed the provisions did not apply to the Officer.

6. A further preliminary point was raised by Counsel for the Officer who wished to hand up a bundle of character references to be considered by the Panel at the fact-finding stage. Counsel for the AA had agreed and suitable redactions had taken place. Mr Rees advised

that the Panel could receive these documents at the fact find stage as they may be relevant to the issues of propensity and truthfulness of the Officer. The Panel considered the documents prior to the parties' submissions.

7. The Panel received a legal direction as to good character from the ILQA

Legal Framework, Factual Background and the course of the Hearing

8. The statutory and regulatory basis of the Panel lies in Section 51 of the Police Act 1996 and the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020 ("the Regulations"). In addition, the Panel is to have proper regard to the Statutory Guidance on Professional Standards, Performance and Integrity in Policing Issued by the Home Office also issued in 2020, known as the "HOG", which states at paragraph 1.4:

> *The procedures described in this guidance are designed to accord with the principles of natural justice and the basic principles of fairness. The process and procedures covered by this guidance, along with the accompanying legal framework, should be administered accordingly and applied fairly and consistently to everyone. The guidance on the individual procedures is designed to further the aims of being fair to the individual who is subject to the process, as well as all parties involved. It is intended to assist with arriving at a correct assessment of the matter in question and providing public and policing confidence in the system.*
>
> ……..
>
> *The persons conducting misconduct hearings will consider the facts of the case and will decide the facts (on the balance of probabilities) and whether the Officer's conduct amounted to misconduct, gross misconduct or neither*

9. The aim of misconduct proceedings is not primarily punitive although they can have that effect on the Officer concerned. The overriding objective is to set and maintain the highest standards of professional integrity, to ensure public confidence in the Police and for the public to see that these things are done in a fair, open and transparent manner.

10. The appropriate standards of professional behaviour for Police Officers are set out in Schedule 2 of the 2020 Regulations and the relevant sections engaged in this matter are Respect & Courtesy, Equality & Diversity, and Discreditable Conduct.

11. The proceedings proceed on the basis of the civil standard of proof, ie: on the balance of probabilities, often referred to as 'is it more likely than not'. The Appropriate Authority bring the case and makes the allegations; it must prove its case against the Officer. The Officer has to prove nothing in their defence. The Panel must be cautious not to reverse this burden of proof.

12. The single allegation is that:

    On 22 August 2024, after collecting Officer A from Central Park Police Station, when asked who he had issued a TOR to, PC Csollak replied: 'It was a taxi driver, some black cunt.'

    It is alleged that the words used by PC Csollak above were offensive and inappropriate and amount to gross misconduct. They breach the following standards of professional behaviour:

    (a) Authority, respect and courtesy;

    (b) Equality and Diversity; and

    (c) Discreditable conduct.

13. The Officer's response was that he strenuously denied the allegation in full.

    He did not use any racist term or the racist term as specifically alleged. He maintains that the only reference within his comments referred only to 'a black male'. He suggests that Officer A misheard a comment about the male being calm & compliant.

14. The Panel heard evidence from Officer A & PC Csollak. The Panel considered both witnesses to be honest, and doing their utmost to assist it in circumstances where the incident is over 2 years in the past and there is little corroborative evidence on either side.

15. The Panel considered it extremely unfortunate that the Officer was not interviewed until 16 May 2025, some 10 months after being served regulation 17 papers and being suspended from duty.

Officer A

16. Officer A's evidence was that she was waiting to be collected after being dropped off for an appointment. The officer was delayed because he had stopped a taxi driver and issued a TOR. When she entered the vehicle, she asked about the TOR. The officer then made the racist comment. She immediately responded "what?" The officer did not repeat the remark.

17. She described the officer as a friend and one of the closest people to her on the team. She stated she did not want him suspended and found reporting him difficult. She accepted there had not previously been racist comments from him.

18. She says she spoke to a colleague, Mark, the following day. (This was the first time that this officer had been mentioned in any account, and this had not formed part of the AA's

case.) She then reported the matter to her sergeant on 24 August. She accepted the reporting process was difficult because of her friendship with the officer.

19. Despite robust challenge, she maintained she heard a reference to a black person coupled with the offensive swear word alleged. She initially rejected suggestions that she had misheard the allegation. Officer A accepted making no contemporaneous notebook entry. She did not record the comment immediately despite being trained that significant comments should be recorded and reported. She agreed she did not challenge the comment in the way expected by police training. Officer A maintained her response was merely "what?"

20. Officer A accepted that this response could be interpreted as not having heard properly rather than challenging the remark. In respect of the possibility of mishearing, she accepted:
    a. she was wearing an earpiece;
    b. there may have been radio traffic;
    c. there may have been music in the car and other background noise;
    d. the officer speaks quickly and has a different and strong West Midlands accent accent.
21. Officer A ultimately accepted she could not completely rule out having misheard the words, although she maintained she believed she heard them correctly. Her witness statement used the phrase "words to the effect of". She accepted that wording introduced some uncertainty. She agreed she was not claiming to recall an exact quotation.

22. It was put to her that the next day she travelled with the officer to collect breakfast for the team. She could not positively dispute that happened. She accepted that such conduct

would be inconsistent with wanting to avoid someone who had just made a serious racist remark.

23. The Panel's impression of Officer A was that she was a truthful witness in whom they could repose confidence, but that her evidence was at times vague and lacking in detail, which she attributed to the passage of time since the incident some two years before the hearing. The panel were reassured by her acceptances where she could not remember. She was clearly doing her best to assist the panel and there were times when she found the process of giving evidence difficult.

PC Csollak

24. The officer's evidence was that: He did not use the racist term alleged. He has never used that language in his career. Racism is fundamentally contrary to his personal values and professional standards. He believes Officer A genuinely misheard what he said.

25. The officer gave evidence regarding his diversity and equality training throughout his Army and police careers; he recounted an incident where he reported racist remarks made by fellow soldiers in the Army. He described his family experiences of discrimination involving relatives of Hungarian origin and a mixed-race family relationship. His evidence was that racism is abhorrent, has no place in policing and is something he has actively challenged when encountered.

26. The officer accepted that the taxi driver was black. The driver was calm and compliant throughout the stop. He may have described him as a "black male" and "calm and compliant". He said he did this to prevent further conversations about the issue, knowing that lacking detail would cause further questions. He spoke sarcastically because

he was annoyed by Officer A's messages telling him effectively to stop issuing TORs and hurry up.

27. PC Csollak told the panel that he speaks quickly and has a West Midlands accent, and he specifically raises this at the start of interviewing to ensure that he is understood by detainees. His evidence was that the environment included radio traffic, earpieces, vehicle noise and activity in the car park.

28. He readily accepted that, if the words had been used, they would be offensive, racist, disrespectful and discreditable. He accepted that any officer hearing such words would have been right to report them. Questions were raised as to why the driver's race was relevant at all. His explanation was that he was being descriptive, responding sarcastically, and providing information he thought would answer potential questions.

29. The Officer accepted that he had reflected extensively on the matter after the interview and that his most detailed explanation involving using the words "calm and compliant" emerged more fully in the Regulation 31 response, than in the interview. He maintained his denial of the allegation.

30. The Panel also considered MC Csollak to be a truthful witness in which they could have confidence. His ready acceptances of matters that he should of course have accepted did not indicate any intention to be combative or oppositional. His evidence was at times lacking in detail, which he attributed to the passage of time since the incident some two years before the hearing. The panel were reassured by his acceptances where he could not remember.

Other Evidence

31. The panel had a single page statement of Sgt Stott, dated 13 October 2024 as the supervisor to whom Officer A had reported on 27 August 2024, and noted there was no other contemporaneous evidence of the conversation.

Legal Advice

32. The Panel were given the following legal advice in respect of character:

    The Panel have been provided with two statements from people who know the Officer professionally from his time in the British Army, and heard live evidence from the Officer.

    The Panel must consider this evidence in addition to the evidence it has heard in the hearing room or read in the hearing bundle.

    Evidence of good character, of a person's being honest and/or an upstanding member of their community, is not a defence in itself to these allegations.

    The weight to be attached to this character evidence is a matter for the Panel.

    Any assertions of fact in those character statements pertaining to these particular allegations must be disregarded.

    The Panel must state what weight, if any, it has put on the character evidence in its Written Reasons.

    This character evidence may assist the Panel in two respects:

    a. Firstly, the Officer gave evidence to the Panel, and the Panel must consider the character evidence in deciding the question of whether it believes the Officer to be a credible witness of fact; and
    b. Secondly, the character evidence may make it less likely that the Officer has behaved as alleged.

Findings, Breaches of Standards, & Severity

33. The Panel was satisfied on the balance of probability that the AA had not proven the single allegation on the facts of the case and accordingly there had been no breaches of the required standards of professional behaviour.

34. While the Panel accepted that Officer A genuinely believed what she had heard, her evidence and her acceptance that she could have misheard was most significant in its view. She had accepted the strong accents, and the Panel noted the general irritation of both parties at the time of the incident. The Panel accepted that she had no obvious motive to invent the allegation and noted that the Officer had not at any point suggested that she had done so. She had not however made a contemporaneous note, despite her training and it was troubling that the evidence of whom she had initially spoken with was not previously considered by the Appropriate Authority and this was not evidence that could assist it any further.

35. The Panel noted the written evidence of Sgt Stott that "OFFICER A has said that when she has asked, she thinks that he replied…" (emphasis added) and considered this significant when allayed to Officer A's statement: "he said something to the effect of…". The lack of detail in the statements did not assist the Panel. Towards the end of her evidence, Officer A qualified her earlier answer about how she wore her earpiece from 'in her left ear', to 'that she now wears it in her left ear but couldn't be sure which ear on the day of the incident'. When added to the other factors, the Panel considered this of note.

36. The Panel accepted the Officer's evidence that it was a comparatively noisy environment in the car, and they experienced in his evidence the issue that the Officer speaks quickly and has a strong accent.

37. The Panel considered it apparent that there was already an air of tension between the officers on the day in question, and noted the evidence of the Officer that he had given an explanation in short order but adding such detail as a young in service police officer likely would, by using the descriptor 'Black' in the same way an officer would described a person as 'White' or 'Asian', and the Panel took note of the fact that providing such descriptors is part and parcel of Police training and Policing in general.

38. The Panel noted that there is no corroborative evidence to support the single allegation of the use of an epithet, the word 'cunt', when describing a black male. The Panel considered Officer A's agreed and accepted conduct on the day after the event, which appears inconsistent with someone immediately distancing themselves from a colleague who had made a serious racist remark.

39. While not probative alone, the Panel noted the Officer's evidence, which was not challenged in cross examination, that he had a developed vetting and security clearance which had considered such behaviours.

40. The Panel attached limited weight to the positive character evidence from army colleagues attesting to no history of racist behaviour and noted the legal advice it had been given on this point

41. The Panel also considered the officer's personal experience of discrimination, which again was not challenged in evidence. In considering the Officer's motivation to use such a racist term, the Panel considered this evidence pointed in the direction of more likely than not, on the basis of his background and service, that he had not done so.

42. All of these factors when considered in totality, contributed to the Panel's determination that it was more likely than not that the Officer had **not** used the words that Officer A had thought she had heard.

43. Accordingly, the AA having not proven the single allegation levied against the officer, there being no breaches of the professional standards, the proceedings conclude.

44. The Panel wished it noted and conveyed to her that it attached no negative comment to Officer A. She had in all respects acted appropriately. No party had suggested she had fabricated this allegation, and she had a genuine belief in what she thought she had heard. She had done the right thing on this basis to speak with a supervisor. While she had not made a contemporaneous record, or an immediate report, the Panel noted her short service at the time of the incident and hoped she had learned from the experience.

Ancillary Issues

45. The Panel wished it to be recorded that there were areas that left a great deal to be desired in respect of the investigation into this matter. In making these comments it should be clearly recorded that these issues were not part of the Panel's evidential deliberation however as an experienced Panel, the following comments are made in the spirit of constructive feedback

46. Officer A's statement appeared to have been produced under little to no investigative interviewing. It was lacking in substantive detail, did not consider any 'Turnbull' type factors of external noise etc and there was no evidence of contemporaneous recording. It was in the Panel's experience, a poor statement of evidence.

47. The issue with the transcript of the Officer's interview caused the Panel to have no confidence in the contents. The quality was extremely poor generally. Offence could have been caused with the failure to transcribe or correct the description of the DIT team properly, (the transcript refers to the DIC Team). The document did not reflect high standards of professionalism expected in matters of such seriousness. The Panel were unable to safely rely upon the transcript it without verification to the recording. At minimum it should have been checked and amended, the use of technology is no substitute for preparing a correct document.

48. The Officer was not interviewed for 10 months after the incident. This is extremely unhelpful and could have been extremely prejudicial to both the investigation/the organisation, and to the Officer, who remains an employee of the organisation.

7 October 2026

Approved by:

ACO Jonathan Roy, LLB (hons), Mst (Cantab), Independent Chair of Police Panels

Jan Lamping -IPM

Mansoor Shah -IPM

Prepared by ILQA:

Jonathan Rees, LLM.