



Devon & Cornwall Police



PCC
Office of the Police and
Crime Commissioner
Devon and Cornwall



DORSET
POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER

Devon and Cornwall and Dorset Police and Crime Commissioners

Summary of the Strategic Alliance Use of Force Scrutiny Panel

Thursday 23 November 2017 at 1.30 pm

Attendees

- Martyn Underhill Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner – MU
- Alison Hernandez Devon & Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner – AH
- Graham Fice Member of the Public, Devon and Cornwall – GF
- Julie Downton Member of the Public , Devon and Cornwall – JD
- Paul Cashmore Member of the Public, Dorset – PC
- Stan Sadler Dorset Healthcare, NHS Mental Health Services – SS
- Charlie Souter-Phillips Vice President – Welfare, Students Union, Bournemouth University – CS
- Ebony Harding Vice President – Community, Students Union, Bournemouth University – EH
- Ian Drummond-Smith Supt Local Policing and Taser Lead, Devon and Cornwall Police – ID
- Jez Noyce Territorial Police Governance Lead and Use of Force Lead, Dorset Police – JN
- Guy Shimmons Chief Inspector Specialist Ops, Devon and Cornwall and Dorset Police. Use of Force Lead, Devon and Cornwall Police – GS
- Karen Mellodew Performance and Customer Services Manager, Devon and Cornwall OPCC – KM
- Tom Smith Governance Advisor, Dorset OPCC – TS
- Becky Hodson Comms and Engagement Officer, Dorset OPCC – BH
- Jon Wasey Staff Officer, Dorset OPCC – JW

Summary of Meeting

Introductions were made and the terms of reference were discussed and agreed by the panel. The panel considered the performance packs and statistics for both force areas. MU spoke about the change in the law which has resulted in much better recording of use of force and greater transparency around these figures. Differences in the format of the statistics between the two force areas were raised and it was agreed that where possible the approach should be aligned. The statistics provided were discussed, changes were proposed to the way these are presented across both force areas. Taser use was discussed and it was noted that this was the safest weapon in terms

of injury according to the statistics; however the use of Taser represents extreme use of force and MU noted that deployment can cause psychological harm to the subject. PC questioned whether the two force areas are devoting as much effort towards the softer skills as they are on use of force. ID confirmed that the primary aim is to resolve situations in a passive manner.

The panel reviewed two cases of Taser use within Devon and Cornwall Police. The first involved Taser fire in connection with an attempted break in at a property in Devon and Cornwall. Case two involved a young person suffering from psychosis armed with a knife with his younger relative. The officers at the scene spent 30 minutes attempting to negotiate with the suspect and managed, in this time, to move closer to the suspect. As officers approached the suspect moved making them believe he was attempting to self-harm; at this point the officers fired the Taser and removed the knife from the suspect. The suspect was then taken to hospital. Praise was given for the amount of time spent attempting to de-escalate the situation prior to the Taser deployment. It was noted that this use of force was/will be reviewed by the force as the subject was under 18 and suffering mental ill health. It was agreed that in this instance this was a proportionate response.

There were five cases of use of force supplied for Dorset Police, however due to time constraints only two of these were discussed in detail. The first case involved officers who arrived to find a female unconscious and the male suspect holding an axe, threatening to use it on a fire extinguisher. One officer administered first aid to the female and the other told the suspect to drop his weapon; the suspect refused and threatened to throw the fire extinguisher at the officer causing him to draw his Taser. The Taser was deployed, causing the suspect to drop the extinguisher. The officer feared for the safety of others as the suspect was still armed so used the Taser at close range. The suspect dropped the weapon and officers used pava spray to detain him. SS commented that in a state of psychosis an individual can develop super human strength. He added that this was a highly volatile situation requiring a number of officers to deal with an extremely violent individual. They had tried to de-escalate the situation but the subject was not willing to comply. The second case discussed involved the 'red dotting' of the suspect who was armed with a knife and threatening self-harm/suicide. The suspect had previously self-harmed, had mental health issues and could be seen with a cut on her arm. Officers asked the suspect to put the knife down but she refused. The officer deployed the Taser with the red dot illuminated and explained to the suspect it would be fired if she did not put the knife down. The suspect released the knife, and after the officers had searched her for further sharps, they administered first aid on her arm, and arranged for her to be taken to hospital.

The theme for the next meeting was agreed as mental health. It was agreed that future meetings would last approximately three hours and the possibility of these being held at Bridport Town Hall will be explored. It was noted that MU was acting as interim chair and an independent chair would be selected from the panel at the next meeting. Meeting dates for 2018 were agreed as; Wednesday 28th February 2018; Thursday 31st May 2018; Thursday 20th September; and Thursday 22nd November 2018.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 28th February 2018.