

Written evidence from Dr. Andrew Watt [PCC Progress 26]

Executive Summary

1. This is a written submission to the Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) with respect to its Inquiry “Police and Crime Commissioners – progress to date”, announced on 6th November 2013.
2. The submission relates primarily to serious concerns regarding the failure of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner and the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime in holding chief officers to account, together with concerns regarding associated serious failures by the IPCC.
3. The Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner, Anthony Stansfield, has concealed alleged perversion of the course of justice by Chief Constable Sara Thornton of Thames Valley Police.
4. The Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime has concealed serious allegations regarding the conduct of Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe.
5. The Professional Standards Department of Thames Valley Police and the Professional Standards function of the Metropolitan Police Service appear to have conspired to pervert the course of justice by concealing alleged criminality by Chief Constable Sara Thornton, Deputy Chief Constable Francis Habgood and Deputy Assistant Commissioner Helen Ball.
6. The Independent Police Complaints Commission has systematically failed to comply with the Law in processing the allegations brought to the attention of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner and the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime.
7. Deborah Glass and Dame Anne Owers of the IPCC appear to be party to the systematic concealment of “serious corruption” by the Police.
8. The Police and Crime Commissioners for Warwickshire, West Mercia and West Midlands have failed to investigate the inadequacies of the Reakes-Williams investigation into what I will term “SuttonColdfieldGate” and the actions of their respective Chief Constables.
9. Police and Crime Commissioners appear to have failed to investigate potential criminality by Police officers in relation to misrecording of crime, as outlined in evidence given recently to the Public Administration Select Committee.

The matters described in relation to Thames Valley Police and the Metropolitan Police Service are complex and to some degree interrelated and therefore cannot readily be described in a linear manner. I have, however, tried to create a quasi-linear narrative to aid understanding. I have preferred repetition to assist flow of the narrative rather than being too brief in summarising these complex events.

Introduction

1. As is the case with many members of the public I was, when I first made contact with the Police in 2003, ignorant of the techniques used by the Police and others to suppress recording and investigation of crime.

2. I first made a verbal report of suspected serious crime to the Metropolitan Police Service in November 2003. I believe that report of serious suspected crime was not recorded by the MPS. Given that that matter was not considered by a Police and Crime Commissioner I do not consider it further in this Written Submission.
3. On 28th October 2010 I made a report of a suspected murder to Thames Valley Police on the basis of an assessment of postmortem and toxicology evidence disclosed a few days earlier. I am a retired doctor with some professional knowledge of the relevant matters. A Unique Reference Number was provided by the Thames Valley Police officer to whom I reported my suspicions – URN 514 of 28th October 2010.
4. Thames Valley Police failed to take even the elementary step of taking a statement from me to establish the detail of the basis for my concerns.
5. I then wrote on several occasions to Chief Constable Sara Thornton, Deputy Chief Constable Francis Habgood and Assistant Chief Constable Helen Ball reiterating my concerns that a murder may have taken place.
6. To the best of my knowledge no meaningful action was taken by the named officers or by Thames Valley Police to investigate these concerns.
7. I concluded that Chief Constable Thornton, Deputy Chief Constable Habgood and Assistant Chief Constable Ball were corrupt Police officers.
8. Following the election of Anthony Stansfield as the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner I reported to him my concerns that Chief Constable Thornton may have perverted the course of justice by blocking appropriate and necessary investigation of a suspected murder.

Recordable Conduct Matters

9. The Police Reform Act 2002 specifies three categories of Police misconduct:
 - (a) Complaints
 - (b) Conduct matters
 - (c) Death and serious injury (DSI) matters
10. The Act and subsidiary legislation specifies how each of these categories of misconduct are to be processed.
11. Some types of “recordable conduct matter” must, by Law, be recorded and referred to the IPCC for consideration and/or investigation.
12. I believe that the matters I referred to the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner and to the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime are “conduct matters” which are required by Law to be recorded and referred to the IPCC.
13. The 2013 version of the IPCC Statutory Guidance provides a summary of the matters relevant to this Written Submission, in a form more accessible than that to be found in the Police Reform Act 2002 and related subsidiary legislation.

14. A schema of how a “conduct matter” should be recorded and referred to the IPCC is shown on page 7 of the IPCC Statutory Guidance.

15. A list of the criteria for “mandatory referral” to the IPCC is given on page 44 of the Statutory Guidance.

16. Among those criteria is “serious corruption” which is defined on page 45 of the Statutory Guidance.

17. The concerns expressed in this submission regarding the conduct of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner and the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime relate to the failure of processing of specific “recordable conduct matters” which, if proved, would constitute “serious corruption” in the IPCC’s definition. Such matters are required by Law to be recorded and referred to the IPCC. They were not.

18. The effect of the failures of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner and of the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime is, in my view, to pervert the course of justice.

The original allegations against the Police

19. On 28th October 2010 I made a report of a suspected murder to Thames Valley Police on the basis of an assessment of postmortem and toxicology evidence disclosed a few days earlier. A Unique Reference Number was provided by the officer to whom I reported my suspicions – URN 514 of 28th October 2010.

20. Thames Valley Police failed to take the elementary step of taking a statement from me to establish the detail of the basis for my concerns.

21. I then wrote on several occasions to Chief Constable Sara Thornton, Deputy Chief Constable Francis Habgood and Assistant Chief Constable Helen Ball.

22. On no occasion despite my repeatedly expressing my concerns to the three named senior officers did Thames Valley Police investigate my concerns.

23. I concluded that Chief Constable Sara Thornton, Deputy Chief Constable Francis Habgood and Assistant Chief Constable Helen Ball were corrupt Police officers.

24. At that time I believe that I was unaware of how to report my suspicion that the three named Thames Valley Police officers were corrupt.

25. I later became aware that Assistant Chief Constable Ball had obtained the post of Deputy Assistant Commissioner with the Metropolitan Police Service.

26. I then wrote to the Serious Misconduct Investigation Unit of the Metropolitan Police Service regarding my suspicions that Deputy Assistant Commissioner Helen Ball had perverted the course of justice with the effect of concealing a murder.

27. Deputy Commissioner Craig Mackey wrote to me stating that my “complaint” would not be recorded.

28. I felt I was being cheated by Deputy Commissioner Mackey but, given my far from complete understanding of the Law relating to Police misconduct, I couldn’t identify the mechanism by which Deputy Commissioner Mackey was cheating me. I then spent several days investigating how the matters I had reported ought to have been processed. Reading the Police Reform Act 2002, The Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2012 and other documentation was less than straightforward.

29. I concluded that the matters I had reported regarding DAC Helen Ball were “serious corruption” (in the IPCC’s definition) which had, by Law, to be recorded by the MPS and had, by Law, to be referred to the IPCC. (Similar considerations apply to the matters regarding Chief Constable Thornton referred to the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner.)

30. I then wrote to Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, the only Metropolitan Police Service officer senior enough to outrank Deputy Commissioner Mackey.

31. Sir Bernard refused to process the concerns regarding DAC Ball and Deputy Commissioner Mackey, contrary to the requirements of the applicable Law.

32. Given that, in my view, Sir Bernard was acting corruptly I took a closer look at his conduct, including his hitherto secret role in the aftermath of the Hillsborough Disaster.

Thames Valley PCC and Chief Constable Sara Thornton

33. As stated earlier I believed that Chief Constable Sara Thornton had acted corruptly to conceal a murder, thereby perverting the course of justice.

34. Following the election of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner I wrote to the Commissioner asking him to investigate my concerns that Chief Constable Thornton had perverted the course of justice.

35. I received neither an acknowledgement nor a reply.

36. I wrote again a few weeks later to Mr. Stansfield. Again I received no reply nor acknowledgement.

37. I phoned Mr. Stansfield’s office and his personal assistant sent me a letter acknowledging that both my letters had been received.

38. I was promised that the Chief Executive would phone me, I think, the following day. He has not done so, despite some months having elapsed.

39. The Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner has concealed alleged “serious corruption” by Chief Constable Sara Thornton.

40. In relation to the conduct of Deputy Chief Constable Habgood, the head of Thames Valley Police Professional wrote refusing to record a “complaint.”. Again, in my view, the concerns were a “recordable conduct matter” that had, by Law, to be referred to the IPCC.

41. In my view Detective Chief Superintendent Nikki Ross’s refusal to record the conduct matters relating to Deputy Chief Constable Habgood had the effect of perverting the course of justice.

The Metropolitan Police Service and DAC Helen Ball

42. I reported suspected perversion of the course of justice by Deputy Assistant Commissioner Helen Ball to the Serious Misconduct Investigation Unit of the Metropolitan Police Service.

43. The letter was acknowledged. I subsequently received a letter from Deputy Commissioner Craig Mackey indicating that no “complaint” would be recorded.

44. I then wrote to Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe about both my concerns about DAC Ball and my concerns about Deputy Commissioner Mackey, since the effect of Deputy Commissioner Mackey’s letter was to conceal the alleged wrongdoing by DAC Ball and thereby appeared to me to pervert the course of justice.

45. Sir Bernard did not process my concerns in accordance with the applicable Law.

46. The effect of Sir Bernard’s action was, in my view, to pervert the course of justice.

MOPAC and Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe

47. Given that Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe had, in my view, suppressed lawful investigation of suspected gross misconduct by DAC Helen Ball and Deputy Commissioner Mackey I took a closer look at Sir Bernard’s conduct.

48. Having spent considerable time examining the documents released by the Hillsborough Independent Panel, I was aware that Sir Bernard had been involved in the aftermath of the Hillsborough Disaster and had obtained the posts of Assistant Chief Constable and Chief Constable of Merseyside Police without, so far as I could establish, disclosing his role in the Hillsborough Disaster aftermath. It seemed to me that Sir Bernard may have been a dishonest Police officer for many years.

49. Sir Bernard’s public comments about the integrity of officers in the so-called “Plebgate” affair also caused me concern.

50. I wrote to the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime, the equivalent of a Police and Crime Commissioner for the Metropolitan Police Service, expressing serious concerns including these “recordable conduct matters”.

51. The Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime, contrary to the requirements of the Law, refused to record or refer to the IPCC my supposed “complaint”.

52. The effect of the refusal by MOPAC is to conceal potentially serious allegations about the conduct of Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, thereby potentially perverting the course of justice.

Failure by the IPCC to investigate

53. Given the evidence of “serious corruption” by Chief Constable Sara Thornton and Deputy Assistant Commissioner Helen Ball and the failure of the Thames Valley PCC and the Metropolitan Police Service to investigate I wrote to Deborah Glass of the IPCC, with whom I had been in correspondence with regard to several matters relating to the Hillsborough Disaster.

54. I had expected the IPCC to process my concerns in accordance with the Law, as it applies to the handling of “recordable conduct matters. To my horror the IPCC too failed to handle the matters in accordance with the requirements of the Law.

55. In time I raised a formal complaint with Ms. Anna O’Rourke of the IPCC regarding the conduct of Ms. Deborah Glass, to whom I had personally reported aspects of my serious concerns.

55. In parallel I also wrote to Dame Anne Owers expressing my concern that the IPCC was systematically concealing “serious corruption” by the Police, including Thames Valley Police and the Metropolitan Police Service.

56. A letter from Ms. O’Rourke indicated, if it was to be believed, that the concealment of serious corruption by the IPCC was with the full authority of the IPCC Executive.

57. I further took Ms. O’Rourke’s letter to indicate that Dame Anne was content to suppress knowledge of “serious corruption” by the Police and also to suppress public knowledge of the IPCC’s own grave errors in concealing such serious Police corruption.

58. It is unknown how many other instances exist of the IPCC suppressing recording and investigation of “serious corruption” by Police officers.

59. I view this situation as indicating that the IPCC is failing in its basic purpose of making the Police accountable.

60. I no longer have faith in the integrity of the IPCC as an organisation and have serious doubts about the integrity of Dame Anne Owers and of Deborah Glass.

“SuttonColdfieldGate”

61. On 12th October 2012 Inspector Mackaill, Detective Sergeant Hinton and Sergeant Jones met with Andrew Mitchell MP. I refer to that meeting and related matters as “SuttonColdfieldGate”.

62. Chief Inspector Reakes-Williams of the joint Warwickshire and West Mercia Professional Standards Department investigated the matter on behalf of Warwickshire Police, West Mercia Police and West Midlands Police.

63. Deborah Glass of the IPCC informed HASC that the Reakes-Williams investigation was satisfactory. That is demonstrably untrue.

64. The deficiencies of the Reakes-Williams investigation are multiple and are serious.

65. The investigation, for example, wholly failed to identify relevant documents and media recordings and also failed to investigate potential misconduct by Sergeant Ian Edwards of West Midlands Police.

66. I wrote to the three Police and Crime Commissioners. None has, so far as can be judged by their replies, instituted a meaningful investigation of my concerns.

Misrecording of Crime by the Police

67. Evidence recently given to the Public Administration Select Committee indicates that misrecording of crime by the Police is both serious, longstanding and systematic.

68. It seems likely that, in at least some forces, criminal offences may have been committed with respect to the misrecording of crime.

69. No Police and Crime Commissioner has, so far as I'm aware, referred the conduct of their chief officer to the IPCC for investigation. Nor has the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime referred Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe to the IPCC with regard to concerns expressed at the Public Administration Select Committee regarding the Metropolitan Police Service.

70. That seems to me to be a serious failure by the Police and Crime Commissioners and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime.

71. The only Police and Crime Commissioner who seems to have acted with respect to their Chief Constable appears to have been the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent. So far as I'm aware, however, any potential criminal activity by the now-retired Chief Constable has not (yet) been investigated.

Conclusions

72. Police and Crime Commissioners (and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime) are seriously failing in holding their chief officers to account for alleged gross misconduct, including "serious corruption" as defined in the IPCC Statutory Guidance.

73. The Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner has concealed alleged perversion of the course of justice by Chief Constable Sara Thornton.

74. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime has concealed serious allegations about the conduct of Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe dating back as far as 1989.

75 Serious failures by the IPCC, in concealing serious Police corruption, have obstructed proper investigation of these serious allegations.

76. The Police and Crime Commissioners have failed to investigate concerns regarding the Reakes-Williams investigation relating to "SuttonColdfieldGate".

77. Police and Crime Commissioners nationally have failed to investigate reported serious corruption in recording of crime statistics.

Actions requested of HASC

78. The failures of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner and the Mayor's Office for Policing and crime raise grave questions about the integrity of the holders of those offices. The effect of those failures is to conceal alleged "serious corruption" by the Police. The failures may constitute the criminal offences of "perverting the course of justice" and/or "misconduct in public office".

79. I can, of course, in principle provide copies of the relevant documentation sent to Thames Valley Police, the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner, the Metropolitan Police Service, the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, the IPCC and the Police and Crime Commissioners for Warwickshire, West Mercia and West Midlands. However, I would require considerable notice to collate all relevant documents.

80. I cannot provide documentation regarding the internal consideration of these serious matters which led to the serious failures by the persons or bodies named earlier in this submission.

81. I ask therefore that the HASC require each of those bodies fully to disclose the relevant correspondence and the documentation relating to the internal processing of these serious matters.

82. I further ask that HASC requires the relevant individuals to give oral evidence to justify their decisions.

Dr Andrew Watt
December 2013