

In the Police Misconduct Panel.

In the Matter of Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police v PC Cameron Challis (PC Challis).

Decision.

Introduction.

1. This is the decision of the Police Misconduct Panel convened on Monday 5th of October 2026 to consider the allegations of professional misconduct brought against PC Challis. The Panel sat for five days between the 5th of October 2026 until 9th of October 2026. The Panel comprised Assistant Chief Constable Dennis Murray (Panel Chair), Mr. Michael Fanning (Independent Panel Member) and Ms. Karen Roberts (Independent Panel Member). The Panel was assisted by Mr Gregor McGill (Legally Qualified Adviser). The Appropriate Authority (“AA”) was represented at the hearing by Mr Zander Goss and PC Challis was represented by Ms. Heather Oliver.

Legal and Regulatory Background.

2. The statutory and regulatory basis of the Panel lies in the Police Reform Act 2002 and the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020 (“the 2020 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”.
3. The 2020 HOG 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.*”
4. Later in the HOG the duty of the panel is summarised thus: “*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".

5. Having determined the facts and deciding what they amount to, the Panel is then enjoined to decide what to do about them. The Panel therefore proceeded in accordance with this basic structure.
6. The purpose of the Police Misconduct Regime is set out in the most recent Guidance from the College of Policing (2023) on the outcomes in such proceedings. It states at paragraph 2.3 that it is threefold, namely (1) to maintain public confidence in, and the reputation of, the police service; (2) to uphold high standards in policing and to deter misconduct; and (3) to protect the public. It is not meant to be primarily punitive but it is accepted that misconduct proceedings can sometimes have that effect on officers involved in them.
7. The appropriate standards of professional behaviour for Police Officers is set out in Schedule 2 of the 2020 Regulations and the standards said to be engaged in this case are as follows: **Discreditable Conduct-** *Police Officers behave in a manner which does not discredit the police service or undermine public confidence in it, whether on or off duty; **Authority Respect and Courtesy-** Police Officers act with self-control and tolerance, treating members of the public and colleagues with respect and courtesy. Police Officers do not abuse their powers or authority and respect the rights of all individuals".*
8. Regulation 41 (15) of the Conduct Regulations provides that the person(s) conducting the misconduct proceedings must review the facts of the case and decide whether the conduct of the officer concerned amounts to misconduct, gross misconduct or neither.
9. Misconduct is defined as a breach of the standards of professional behaviour that is so serious as to justify disciplinary action. Gross Misconduct is defined as a breach of the standards of professional behaviour that is so serious as to justify dismissal.

Relevant Regulatory Case Law.

10. In **Bolton v Law Society [1994] 1 WLR 512** Lord Bingham MR said in the context of solicitor's disciplinary proceedings that it was required of lawyers practising in the UK "*that they should discharge their professional duties with integrity, probity and complete trustworthiness*". He said that the most fundamental purpose of professional disciplinary proceedings was to maintain the profession's reputation and

to “sustain public confidence in the integrity of the profession... a profession’s most valuable asset is its collective reputation and the confidence which that inspires.”.

11. In the case of **Redgrave v Metropolitan Police [2003] 1 WLR 1136**, the Court of Appeal adopted Lord Diplock’s description of the purpose of disciplinary proceedings in *Ziderman v General Dental Council* [1976] 1 WLR 330:

“The purpose of disciplinary proceedings against a dentist who has been convicted of a criminal offence by a court of law is not to punish him a second time for the same offence but to protect the public who may come to him as patients and to maintain the high standards and good reputation of an honourable profession”.

12. In the case of **R(Green) v Police Complaints Authority [2004] UKHL 6 at 78**, Lord Carswell said as follows:

“Public confidence in the police is a factor of great importance in the maintenance of law and order in the manner which we regard as appropriate in our polity. If citizens feel that improper behaviour on the part of police officers is left unchecked and they are not held accountable for it in a suitable manner, that confidence will be eroded”.

13. In the case of *R(Coke-Wallis) v Institute of Chartered Accountants* [2011] UKSC 1 at 60, Lord Collins reaffirmed the purpose of professional disciplinary proceedings to be:

“...to protect the public, to maintain public confidence in the integrity of the profession and to uphold proper standards of behaviour....”.

14. In **Chief Constable of Dorset v PAT and Salter [2011] EWHC 3366 (Admin)** the High Court set out three important factors to be considered (dealing with outcome but relevant also to the purpose of misconduct proceedings):

“..It follows that when considering questions of sanction, the Panel, the Chief Constable on review and the Tribunal should have regard to the following factors:

i. The imposition of sanctions following a finding of misconduct by a police officer may have three elements:

a. There may be a punitive element designed to punish the police officer concerned and to deter others, particularly if he has not been prosecuted and convicted. But the imposition of sanctions is not primarily punitive, and may not be punitive at all.

b. The sanctions imposed may be designed to ensure that the police officer does not have the opportunity to repeat his misconduct.

c. However, the most important purpose of these sanctions, particularly in cases involving dishonesty and impropriety in connection with an investigation, is to maintain public confidence in the police service and to maintain its collective reputation.

li. One consequence of the fact that sanctions imposed in the disciplinary process are not primarily punitive is that personal mitigation is likely to have a limited impact on the outcome.”.

15. The weight to be given to personal mitigation, because of the nature and purpose of those proceedings, was discussed further in the case of **Williams v Police Appeal Tribunal [2016] EWHC 2708 (Admin) at paragraph 67** where Holroyde J (as he then was) stated as follows:

“..the importance of maintaining public confidence in and respect for the police service is constant, regardless of the nature of the gross misconduct under consideration. What may vary will be the extent to which the particular gross misconduct threatens the preservation of such confidence and respect . The more it does so, the less weight can be given to personal mitigation”.

Matters of law about which the Panel were given guidance by the Legally Qualified Adviser.

16. **Good Character**: “The Panel should treat PC Challis as a person of good character when it makes its deliberations. In doing so, the Panel should have regard to the following matters:

(1) Good character is not a defence to the charge.

(2) However, evidence of good character counts in PC Challis’s favour in two ways:

(a) PS Challis’s good character supports PS Challis’s credibility and so is something the panel should take into account in deciding whether they believe PS Challis’s evidence (this is called the credibility limb): and

(b) PC Challis’s good character may mean that PC Challis is less likely to have committed the offence with which he is charged (this is called the propensity limb).

(c) It is for the Panel to decide what weight they give to the evidence of good character, taking into account everything they have heard and read in the bundle about PC Challis”.

Allegations faced by PC Challis.

17. PC Challis faced the following allegations:

“Regulation 30 allegations.

(1) On the 21st December 2023, you behaved in the following manner towards PC Matthews whilst at the Oakford Social Club:

(a) Said words to the effect of, “ME AND YOU CAN STILL HAPPEN”, “WE WOULD HAVE A GOOD TIME TOGETHER”, “DO YOU WANT TO?”, “YOU’RE A LOVELY GIRL AND I HOPE YOU FIND SOMEONE, BUT I DO THINK WE WOULD HAVE A GOOD TIME SEXUALLY”.

(b) Repeatedly positioned yourself physically close to PC Matthews, touching her, without her consent.

(2) On the 21st – 22nd December 2023, whilst on the way to and once at the Cocktail Club, you behaved in the following manner towards PC Matthews:

(a) Persistently encouraged PC Matthews to climb onto your back, despite her stating that she did not want to do so;

(b) Repeatedly tried to put your arms around PC Matthews’ shoulders and waist, without her consent;

(c) Tried to pull PC Matthews towards you by her hand, without her consent;

(d) Once on the dance floor, repeatedly touched her around the waist and attempted to pick her up by touching her bottom, without her consent;

(e) Said words to the effect of, “AH SHALL WE? LET’S HAVE SEX, DO YOU WANT TO AS I THINK WE SHOULD”;

(f) Touched her around the waist whilst outside the premises, without her consent.

(3) On the 6th January 2024 you:

(a) Touched PC Matthews repeatedly by placing your hands on her throat, without her consent, and;

(b) Whilst touching her on the throat, said, “ONE DAY, ME AND YOU ONE DAY”.

(4) On the 24th May 2025, said to PC Matthews, “I WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU TASTE LIKE”.

(5) On the 21st December 2023 whilst at the Cocktail Club, you made deliberate physical contact with Former PC A by placing your body weight on top of her, causing you both to lie horizontally on a seated area. You did not have her consent to do so.

(6) On the 21st December 2023 whilst at the Cocktail Club you behaved in the following manner towards PC B:

(a) You attempted to pick her up on the dancefloor, without her consent, and;

(b) Whilst outside the premises, touched her bottom without her consent.

Your behaviour as described above amounts to conduct which was disrespectful, degrading and sexually inappropriate. You have failed to treat your colleagues with any respect or courtesy and you have brought discredit upon the police service. You have therefore breached the Standards of Professional Behaviour relating to Authority, Respect and Courtesy and Discreditable Conduct. Your conduct amounts to Gross Misconduct.”

18. The AA withdrew allegation 6(a) during the hearing and that matter was not considered by the Panel.

Documents considered by the Panel.

19. The following documents were available to the Panel:

- The Hearing Bundle numbered 1-79;
- CCTV evidence from the Cocktail Club on 21st December 2024;
- Testimonial evidence served on behalf of PC Challis; and
- Service Record of PC Challis.

Analysis and decision.

Preliminary Matters.

The CCTV.

20. There was CCTV recovered from the cocktail club where the allegations that were set out in allegation 2 are said to have occurred. That CCTV evidence was played extensively during the course of the misconduct hearing. It was submitted to the Panel that great weight should be put on upon this CCTV evidence. The Panel accepted that it was a contemporaneous **visual** record of what was said to have occurred in the cocktail club on the 21st December 2024 but it did not, contrary to the submissions made to the Panel, provide a full record of what happened on the relevant night. There was no sound on the CCTV and the quality of the CCTV, though adequate, was not crystal clear. The Panel was invited to draw inferences from the reactions of persons caught on the CCTV e.g. persons were smiling or

laughing and did not seem to be upset. The Panel found this hard to do and had to balance those submissions with the live evidence that it heard from witnesses that there was sometimes no adverse reaction to PC Challis's behaviour because they did not want to cause a scene or spoil the mood of the party. The Panel was therefore able to give some weight to the CCTV evidence as to what was alleged to have happened in the cocktail club on the 21st December 2024 but it was satisfied that it did not provide the full picture as was submitted.

The Witness evidence.

21. The Panel heard from the following live witnesses:

- (a) PC Matthews.
- (b) PC Lauren Wellstead.
- (c) PC Gemma Thomas-Knight.
- (d) PC Sophia Jordan.
- (e) Former PC A.
- (f) PC B.
- (g) Former PC C.
- (h) PC Lewis Kelley.

22. It was suggested in submissions made to the Panel that the evidence of PC Matthews, PC Lauren Wellstead, PC A and PC B should be treated with caution by the Panel because they were all good friends and that their statements were written to support the evidence of PC Matthews. To deal with submission, the Panel sets out its findings on the oral evidence it received at the hearing.

23. The Panel concluded that **PC Matthews** was an honest, credible and reliable witness. The Panel concluded this for the following reasons:

- (a) PC Matthews accepted that she and PC Challis had been out on two dates, but after that she decided that she did not want to pursue any romantic relationship with him. She gave him the reasons and was clear that she did not want a relationship.
- (b) She was balanced and fair in her evidence to the Panel. She conceded that she did not think that PC Challis had any malign intent towards her and also conceded that he did not want to upset her. She conceded that he was a different person when he was intoxicated to the one he was when he was at work and sober. She conceded that it would have been possible to confront PC Challis about his behaviour when he was sober -which she says she did after the touching of the throat incident- but it

was more difficult to do so when he was intoxicated. The Panel accepted that evidence.

- (c) PC Matthews was credible and convincing when she said that she told PC Challis on multiple occasions to stop his conduct towards her on nights out. The Panel accepted this evidence as honest, reliable and truthful.
- (d) It was suggested by those representing PC Challis that the evidence of PC Matthews could not be relied on because, if the words said to be used by PC Challis were said to her, other people would have heard them. The Panel rejected this submission. There was no sound on the CCTV and so little help was given on this matter by the CCTV. The Panel heard evidence that the music was loud in the cocktail club so it was entirely possible that no one other than PC Matthews heard the words used by PC Challis towards her. It was also possible that, even in a tightly packed group, individual comments made by one person to another may not be heard by others if they were concentrating on their own conversations. The Panel was satisfied that this did not undermine the credibility of PC Matthews evidence.
- (e) In one of the disputed comments made by PC Challis, PC Matthews stated that PC Challis told her that he hoped that she found someone. PC Challis accepted that he said this but denied making the sexual comments. The Panel considered that this supported PC Matthews' credibility.
- (f) The upset caused to PC Matthews by PC Challis' behaviour was supported by the evidence of PC Lauren Wellstead, Former PC A and PC Gemma Thomas-Knight. The fact that it was confirmed by PC Thomas-Knight (and not challenged by those representing PC Challis) was significant because it was not suggested that PC Thomas-Knight was a close friend of PC Matthews.
- (g) PC Challis' account of the words used was that he had no recollection of making the comments as he was intoxicated. He also said that he did not think he would say those things to her although his account was that, even after deciding that any relationship between them was not going to happen, they continued to talk to each other in a sexualised way. Given the amount of alcohol consumed by PC Challis (and by his own admission he was very drunk, a fact that can be clearly seen on the CCTV), his evidence was not enough to undermine the credibility and reliability of the evidence of PC Matthews.

24. The Panel concluded that **PC Lauren Wellstead** was an honest, credible and reliable witness. The Panel concluded this for the following reasons:

- (a) PC Wellstead accepted that PC Challis was energetic, outgoing, wanted everyone to join in and indulged in horseplay (e.g. picking people up etc).
- (b) She said his behaviour was different when he was intoxicated. She had known him for about 6 months at the time. She was balanced and fair in her evidence to the Panel.
- (c) She was clear in her evidence to the Panel that she had seen PC Challis being mainly close to PC Matthews at the Oakford Social Club. She was clear that PC Challis had his hand on PC Matthews shoulder and waist. This was entirely consistent with PC Challis' evidence to the Panel as to how he acted on a night out. She was also clear that this sort of behaviour was not done to any other female in the group but only to PC Matthews.

25. The Panel concluded that **PC Thomas-Knight** was an honest, truthful and credible witness. The Panel concluded this for the following reasons.

- (a) PC Thomas -Knight was not alleged to be in the friendship group of PC Matthews, PC Wellstead and PC A.
- (b) She described PC Challis as shy and introverted. He was competent, knowledgeable and a good police officer. She stated that PC Challis would drink to loosen himself up on a night out, a fact accepted by PC Challis himself. She was fair and balanced in her evidence to the Panel.
- (c) PC Thomas-Knight stated that she had spoken to PC Matthews when PC Matthews had complained about the actions of PC Challis to her. This evidence was not challenged by those representing PC Challis. She also gave evidence that when PC Challis was told by PC Kelley when outside the Club at the end of the night that his behaviour was upsetting the female officers, PC Challis became annoyed by that and looked like he was going to punch PC Kelley, so she stepped in to reduce tensions. The Panel was satisfied that her evidence was objective, honest, truthful and reliable

26. The Panel concluded that the evidence of **PC B** could not be relied on. The Panel concluded this for the following reasons:

- (a) In her evidence to the Panel, PC B became confused and accepted that she may have been mistaken that PC Challis had dragged PC Matthews to the dance floor. She also accepted that she may have been mistaken about whether PC Challis had picked her up on the dance floor. As a result of her evidence, the AA withdrew allegation 6(a).

- (b) Although the Panel had no doubt about the honesty of the evidence of PC B, it concluded that it was unreliable and could not support any allegation made against PC Challis. The Panel could not be sure of the accuracy of her evidence and it could not be relied on and did not reach the required standard to prove allegation 6(b).

27. The Panel considered **PC A** to be an honest, truthful and reliable witness. The Panel concluded this for the following reasons:

- (a) PC A readily accepted that she was a good friend of PC Matthews. She also accepted that she and PC Matthews had discussed PC Challis' behaviour towards PC Matthews but they stopped talking about it as soon as it was reported by PC Matthews.
- (b) PC A stated that she had had no previous problem with PC Challis' behaviour towards her. They had not interacted that much. She described him as a good police officer who was operationally astute.
- (c) In respect of the incident involving her, she was balanced and fair in her evidence. She was clear that she did not believe it to be sexually motivated but more of a silly, stupid drunken prank. Although she felt embarrassed by the incident, she was clear that she was not traumatized by it and did not consider herself to be a victim. Her evidence was balanced, fair and credible.

28. The Panel considered **PC Lewis Kelley** to be an honest, credible and reliable witness. The Panel concluded this for the following reasons:

- (a) PC Kelley readily conceded that his statement was not of the quality as a statement that he would produce now. When he provided the statement, he was junior in service and had developed his statement writing since.
- (b) PC Kelley was fair and balanced in his evidence to the Panel. He stated that he saw nothing unusual in the Oakford social club. He did say that, although he had not included it in his statement, PC Matthews had told him on the night in the cocktail club, that she was uncomfortable with PC Challis picking her up on the dance floor and that she asked him to stand between them to stop PC Challis doing this. He stated that he did not think that there was anything sexual in PC Challis picking PC Matthews up.
- (c) The Panel ultimately concluded that PC Kelley was an honest, truthful and reliable witness. His explanation as to why he had not included the comments made to him by PC Matthews was credible due to his lack of service. The Panel did conclude,

however, that it would give less weight to these comments as they were not contained in his original statement but concluded that they had some weight as they supported the accounts of others and was consistent with what had happened on the night. The CCTV evidence was clear that PC Matthews did speak to PC Kelley after being picked up by PC Challis but as there is no sound on the video it is impossible to know exactly what was said.

- (d) PC Kelley was clear that he had not spoken to others about this matter as he had moved to another station and did not see or talk to his old colleagues much.

29. The Panel considered **PC C** to be an honest witness but did not find his evidence credible or reliable. The Panel concluded this for the following reasons:

- (a) PC C was a close friend of PC Challis. He had met PC Challis at his home address and started drinking with him there. He said that he regularly socialized with PC Challis out of work.
- (b) It was clear from his own admission that PC C was very intoxicated on the night and this might have affected his recollection of the incidents on the night.
- (c) The Panel did not find the explanation given by PC C about the incident involving PC A to be at all credible. PC C said that he did not think that PC Challis' behaviour towards PC A was inappropriate -but he did accept that it was wrong. The Panel did not understand this evidence. If behaviour is wrong, it must be inappropriate. Unprompted, PC C raised the Police Code of Ethics but then did not develop that. This explanation of PC C caused the Panel to doubt the credibility and reliability of the evidence of PC C.
- (d) Further, it was suggested by PC C (and by those representing PC Challis) that there was no confrontation between PC C and PC Challis after he had been pulled off of PC A. The Panel did not accept that evidence or those submissions and, even accepting the limitations of the CCTV, it was clear from the CCTV that there was some sort of confrontation between PC Challis and PC C. That was accepted by PC Challis who said it was probable (because he cannot recall) that PC C was challenging him about what he had done. PC A gave evidence that she saw a confrontation and that she heard them both shouting at each other. The CCTV showed PC Challis and PC C in close proximity and PC Challis pushing PC C's hand away. The Panel concluded that this evidence given by PC C lacked credibility and therefore lacked reliability.

30. The Panel considered **PC Jordan** to be an honest witness but did not find her evidence to be reliable. The Panel concluded this for the following reasons:
- (a) Despite being referred to her statement and accepting it as truthful, PC Jordan stated that she had little recollection of any of the incidents and stated that she could not remember even those matters contained in her statement. She was therefore unable to help the Panel to any significant degree with the matters it had to consider.
 - (b) The Panel therefore gave no weight to the evidence of PC Jordan.
31. There were a number of other statements made by officers that were contained in the hearing bundle. These involved statements from PS Andrew Fielder, PC Amelia Baird, PC Lewis Appleton and PC Sam Wells. Each of these statements indicated that these officers did not see anything wrong on the night of the 21st December 2024 (save for PC Lewis Appleton who saw PC Challis on top of PC A and saw PC Kelley trying to get PC Challis off of PC A). The Panel considered these statements but ultimately concluded that just because these officers did not see what happened, it did not mean what was alleged against PC Challis did not take place. These officers would not have necessarily heard what PC Matthews said to PC Challis (and other officers) about PC Challis's behaviour on the night. Ultimately, the Panel concluded that these statements did not undermine the clear evidence of PC Matthews, PC Wellstead, PC A, PC Thomas-Knight and PC Kelley as to what had happened on the 21st of December 2024.

Decision on the allegations.

32. The Panel followed the route to verdict agreed by the parties before the Panel retired.

Allegation 1.

Allegation 1(a).

33. The Panel found this matter proved. The reasons for this decision were as follows:
- (a) The evidence of PC Matthews. The Panel had previously set out its reasons as to why it found the evidence of PC Matthews to be honest, credible and truthful. It did not intend to set those reasons out again in this or in any other allegation.
 - (b) The words used by PC Challis form part of a pattern of behaviour by PC Challis, as similar words form the basis of further allegations alleged against him. The Panel noted that PC Challis accepted that he had said that he hoped that PC Matthews found someone and this added to PC Matthews' credibility about the content of this

statement. The Panel also noted that, in his evidence, PC Challis accepted that he continued to make sexualized innuendos to PC Matthews in communications between them. PC Matthews denied indulging in this (although she accepted some fliting may have taken place) and no evidence was produced to show that this happened. The Panel preferred PC Matthew's evidence on this point and noted that PC Challis' evidence amounted to him saying that he cannot recollect the comments or making them as he was intoxicated. PC Matthews had a clear recollection and the Panel accepted her evidence on this point.

- (c) In the context of the totality of the conduct alleged and found proved against PC Challis, the Panel was satisfied that this conduct was unwanted and sexually inappropriate, degrading and disrespectful.

Allegation 1(b).

34. The Panel found this matter proved. The reasons for this decision were as follows:

- (a) The evidence of PC Matthews.
- (b) The evidence of PC Matthews was supported by the evidence of PC Wellstead. She said that she saw PC Challis mainly being close to PC Matthews at the Oakford Social Club. She was clear that PC Challis had his hand on PC Matthews shoulder and waist. This was entirely consistent with PC Challis's evidence to the Panel as to how he acted on a night out. She was also clear that this sort of behaviour was not done to any other female in the group but only to PC Matthews.
- (c) In the context of the totality of the conduct alleged and found proved against PC Challis, the Panel was satisfied that this conduct was unwanted and sexually inappropriate, degrading and disrespectful.

Allegation 2.

Allegations 2(a)(b) and (c).

35. The Panel found these matters proved. The reasons for this decision were as follows:

- (a) PC Challis accepted this conduct.
- (b) The evidence of PC Matthews was clear that she had made it clear to PC Challis that this conduct by him was unwanted. These incidents have to be seen in the context of the admission made by PC Challis that his conduct that formed the basis of allegation 3 in these proceedings (the touching of PC Matthews throat on the 6th of January 2024 was unwanted and he knew it was unwanted). He was on notice that

PC Matthews was made uncomfortable by his conduct and he should have taken this into account in his conduct to her.

- (c) In the context of the totality of the conduct alleged and found proved against PC Challis, the Panel was satisfied that this conduct was unwanted and sexually inappropriate, degrading and disrespectful.

Allegation 2(d).

36. The Panel found these matters proved. The reasons for this decision were as follows:

- (a) The evidence of PC Matthews was clear that her bottom was touched.
- (b) The CCTV evidence, limited as it was, clearly showed PC Challis repeatedly picking PC Matthews up on the dance floor.
- (c) Although the CCTV was not clear exactly where his hands and arms were when picking up PC Matthews, PC Challis conceded that it was possible that his arm touched her bottom when he was picking her up. The Panel was satisfied that it was more likely than not that his arm did touch her bottom and that this was unwanted, as he well knew or should have known. The Panel also took into consideration his intoxication which made it more likely that this conduct occurred. The Panel was satisfied that the intention of PC Challis was not relevant to what actually occurred, although the Panel accepted that it could have an effect on seriousness.
- (d) In the context of the totality of the conduct alleged and found proved against PC Challis, the Panel was satisfied that this conduct was unwanted and sexually inappropriate, degrading and disrespectful.

Allegation 2 (e).

37. The Panel found this matter proved. The reasons for this decision were as follows:

- (a) The evidence of PC Matthews.
- (b) This conduct formed part of a pattern of behaviour carried out by PC Challis towards PC Matthews. It was a further example of a sexualized comment made by PC Challis towards PC Matthews when out and intoxicated.
- (c) PC Challis did not deny that he made the comment; he stated that he could not recall making the comment because of his intoxication. He also stated that he did not think he would make this type of comment. PC Matthews' evidence was clear that he did and the Panel was satisfied to the relevant standard that the comment was made to PC Matthews by PC Challis as stated by her.

- (d) In the context of the totality of the conduct alleged and found proved against PC Challis, the Panel was satisfied that this conduct was unwanted and sexually inappropriate, degrading and disrespectful.

Allegation 2 (f)

38. This conduct was admitted by PC Challis. In the context of the totality of the conduct alleged and found proved against PC Challis, the Panel was satisfied that this conduct was unwanted and sexually inappropriate, degrading and disrespectful.

Allegation 3.

Allegation 3 (a).

39. PC Challis admitted this conduct. He accepted that it was unwanted and that he knew it was unwanted. In the context of the totality of the conduct alleged and found proved against PC Challis, the Panel was satisfied that this conduct was unwanted sexually inappropriate, degrading and disrespectful.

Allegation 3 (b).

40. The Panel found this matter proved. The reasons for this decision were as follows:
- (a) The evidence of PC Matthews.
 - (b) This conduct forms part of a pattern of behaviour carried out by PC Challis towards PC Matthews. It was a further example of a sexualized comment made by PC Challis towards PC Matthews when out and drunk.
 - (c) PC Challis did not deny that he made the comment; he stated that he could not recall making the comment because of his intoxication. He also stated that he did not think he would make this type of comment. PC Matthews' evidence was clear that he did and the Panel was satisfied to the relevant standard that the comment was made to PC Matthews by PC Challis as stated by her.
 - (d) The Panel noted that this comment appears to have been made in the context of a planned trip some members of the team were making to Brighton for a night out. It was said to be a "boy's night out". PC Matthews was clear that the comment was made in inviting her to the night out on the basis that she and PC Challis could share a hotel room. PC Challis accepted that he did invite PC Matthew's on the trip but denied he stated any sexual motive. This was another example of PC Challis accepting part of a conversation but denying the sexual content. The Panel accepted

the evidence of PC Matthews on this matter in preference to the account given by PC Challis.

- (e) In the context of the totality of the conduct alleged and found proved against PC Challis, the Panel was satisfied that this conduct was unwanted and sexually inappropriate, degrading and disrespectful.

Allegation 4.

41. The Panel found this matter proved. The reasons for this decision were as follows:

- (a) The evidence of PC Matthews.
- (b) This conduct formed part of a pattern of behaviour carried out by PC Challis towards PC Matthews. It was a further example of a sexualized comment made by PC Challis towards PC Matthews when out and drunk.
- (c) PC Challis did not deny that he made the comment; he stated that he cannot recall making the comment because of his intoxication. He also stated that he did not think he would make this type of comment. If he did make the comment, he stated it would have been a light hearted comment. The Panel was satisfied that he made the comment alleged and accepted PC Matthew's evidence on this matter. The Panel noted that this is a highly sexualized comment and did not accept that such a comment could be considered light hearted if made to a work colleague.
- (d) In the context of the totality of the conduct alleged and found proved against PC Challis, the Panel was satisfied that this conduct was unwanted sexually inappropriate, degrading and disrespectful.

Allegation 5.

42. This conduct was admitted by PC Challis. PC Challis accepted that the conduct of him towards PC A was unwanted. The Panel was satisfied that this conduct was not sexually inappropriate or degrading. PC A was clear that she was not traumatized by the conduct and did not consider herself to be a victim. She was embarrassed by the incident but the Panel was satisfied that embarrassment in these circumstances was not sufficient for the conduct to be degrading. The Panel was satisfied however that it was unwanted and disrespectful to PC A.

Allegation 6 (b) (allegation 6 (a) having been deleted from the Regulation 30 allegations).

43. The Panel found this matter not proved. The reasons for this decision were as follows:
- (a) The evidence produced by the AA was insufficient to meet the evidential standard to prove these allegations.
 - (b) The Panel considered the evidence of PC Wilcox to be truthful but she was unsure about the content of her statement and accepted that she may have been mistaken about some aspects of what she put in her statement. The Panel could not, in these circumstances, consider her evidence to be reliable and therefore found this matter not proved.

Breaches of the Professional Standards.

44. **Authority, Respect and Courtesy:** The Panel was satisfied that PC Challis pursued a course of conduct against PC Matthews in which he continually made sexualized and inappropriate comments to her and continued to touch her when she had informed him that she did not want him to do so. His conduct towards her was unwanted, sexually inappropriate, degrading and disrespectful. It amounts to a clear breach of this professional standard. The Panel also concluded that the admitted conduct of PC Challis towards PC A (lying on top of her and refusing to get off of her even when she was trying to push him away) also amounted to a clear breach of this standard in that he failed to treat PC A with respect and courtesy.
45. **Discreditable Conduct:** The Panel was satisfied that the conduct of PC Challis towards PC Matthews is conduct capable of bringing discredit on the police force. He engaged in a course of action of highly sexualized behaviour towards her when he knew, or should have known, that it was unwanted. The conduct of PC Challis towards PC A, although less serious than that towards PC Matthews, also showed a pattern of treating female colleagues without respect and courtesy and that is capable of bringing the police service into disrepute.

Level of seriousness.

46. The Panel assessed the seriousness of this conduct by following the guidance set out in the College of Policing Guidance on Outcomes (2023 edition).
47. The panel assessed the seriousness of the proven conduct by reference to

- The officer's culpability;
- The harm caused by the Misconduct;
- The existence of any aggravating features; and
- The existence of any mitigating factors.

48. **Culpability:** The panel noted the following:

- PC Challis' conduct was intentional, deliberate and particularly targeted against PC Matthews.
- PC Challis' behaviour occurred on 3 nights out in 2024. His conduct was sexually inappropriate, degrading and disrespectful to PC Matthews.
- He continued the behaviour when he was told by PC Matthews that she was not comfortable with his conduct and asked him to stop. He failed to do so and continued with the conduct.
- His conduct towards PC Matthews was aggravated by his conduct towards PC A and showed a pattern of behaviour by him where he treated female colleagues without respect and courtesy.
- The Panel concluded that his conduct towards PC Matthews and PC A had a **high level of culpability**.

49. **Harm:** The panel noted the following:

- There was the possibility of reputational harm to Thames Valley Police by the conduct of PC Challis.
- The Panel took particular note of paragraph 4.66 of the College of Policing Guidance and that harm would likely undermine public confidence in policing. The Panel noted that, where an officer commits an act or acts that would harm public confidence, it should take it into account.
- The Panel noted paragraph 4.69 of the relevant guidance and considered the public would be concerned by the behaviour of PC Challis, particularly towards PC Matthews. If police officers cannot treat their colleagues with respect and courtesy, there must be a risk that they would fail to treat members of the public with respect and courtesy.
- Although this conduct is not at the same level as other misconduct committed by police officers recently, the Panel did take into account the contents of paragraph 4.70 of the relevant guidance and that there was a clear public concern about the behaviour of some police officers at present. Police officers are expected to

comply with the relevant police standards of professional behaviour and a repeated failure to do so is likely to add to that public concern.

- The Panel assessed the harm caused by PC Challis' behaviour as **Medium**.

50. **Aggravating features:** The panel noted the following:

- His conduct was a significant deviation from the Police Code of Ethics which requires police officers to treat all persons with respect and courtesy.
- There were multiple proven allegations and/or breaches of the Standards of Professional Behaviour.
- PC Challis had shown little insight into his behaviour or conduct. PC Challis seemed to expect the persons on the receiving end of his conduct to inform him that it was unwanted. He took no responsibility himself. He expected other people to challenge him if they found his conduct unacceptable but did not take into account his level of intoxication at the time and his response to challenge if it was made. His response to PC C and PC Lewis Kelley would make people reluctant to challenge him when intoxicated.

51. **Mitigating factors:**

- The Panel noted the attempt by PC Challis to apologise to PC Matthews at the end of the night on the 21st of December 2024.
- PC Challis admitted some of the allegations faced by him at this Misconduct hearing.

Level of Seriousness.

52. **The Panel was satisfied that the matters found proved above, and the consequent breaches of professional standards arising from those breaches, amounted cumulatively to Gross Misconduct, that is conduct that is so serious as to justify dismissal.** The Panel was satisfied that the allegations found proved in relation to PC Matthews amounted cumulatively to Gross Misconduct in their own right. The Panel was satisfied that the matters found proved in relation to PC A amount to Misconduct, that is conduct so serious as to justify disciplinary action.

Decision on sanction.

53. The Panel considered the appropriate outcome for this matter using the College of Policing Guidance on Outcomes in Police Misconduct Proceedings [2023 Edition].

54. Paragraph 4.2 of this Guidance sets out the three stages to determining the appropriate sanction in these proceedings. The Panel first had to assess the seriousness of the misconduct. Secondly, the Panel needed to keep in mind the purpose for imposing sanctions in police misconduct proceedings. Thirdly, the Panel needed to choose the outcome that appropriately fulfilled that purpose, given the seriousness of the conduct in question.
55. The Panel relied on its findings on seriousness set out in its findings on determining the level of Misconduct in these proceedings. The Panel adopted and relied on its findings and assessment of culpability (being careful to avoid double counting with aggravating factors identified as advised by those representing PC Challis), harm, and the identification of the relevant aggravating factors and mitigating factors set out in the decision on the facts, the breaches of the appropriate standards of professional conduct and the level of misconduct already set out. The Panel was unable to consider any personal harm to PC Matthews as no evidence, either directly from her or from any other person, of such harm was provided to the Panel.
56. The Panel considered the service record of PC Challis. There were no previous disciplinary findings recorded against him. The Panel read the character evidence submitted on his behalf.
57. The Panel reminded itself of the threefold purpose of police misconduct proceedings, namely to:
- Maintain public confidence in and reputation of the police service.
 - Uphold high standards in policing and deter misconduct.
 - Protect the public.
58. The available outcomes at a Misconduct Hearing in these circumstances were as follows:
- Final written warning;
 - Reduction in rank; and
 - Dismissal without Notice
59. As PC Challis is a PC, the option of reduction of rank was not open to the Panel.
60. The Panel considered the least serious sanction first to determine whether that sanction would deal with the level of seriousness of the conduct of PC Challis. The Panel considered a Final Written Warning and concluded that a **Final Written Warning** was an appropriate and proportionate sanction in these circumstances. The Panel

considered that a period of **4 years** as the operative period of the Final Written Warning as appropriate and proportionate. The panel concluded that this sanction and the length of this sanction was appropriate for the following reasons:

- All the witnesses that gave evidence were consistent that PC Challis was diligent and professional police officer;
- All the witnesses confirmed to the Panel, including the main witness PC Matthews, that she did not believe that PC Challis had any malign intent towards her or meant to upset her;
- PC A stated that she was not traumatized by the incident, did not feel that she was a victim and confirmed that PC Challis was a good police officer and was operationally astute; and
- Despite the positive aspects of PC Challis' set out in the above three bullet points, the Panel remained concerned that PC Challis had still not demonstrated that he had developed full insight into the effects of his behaviour on others. He consistently stated that no one told him that his behaviour was not acceptable. He did not understand that the responsibility was on him to behave appropriately and not in ways that was unwanted and he could not "sub-contract" the responsibility for his behaviour on others, nor seek reassurance as to what happened when he was intoxicated after the event. By having to ask that question, he must have realized that his conduct, whilst intoxicated, might have caused his colleagues concern. The Panel was satisfied, however, that PC Challis still had something to offer Thames Valley Police, and the extended period of the Final Written Warning would ensure that he had sufficient time to continue to gain that insight, whilst still protecting colleagues who did not wish his behaviour to continue against them in similar circumstances.

61. The Panel was satisfied that this sanction was sufficient to fulfil the threefold purpose of Police Misconduct proceedings set out above.

ACC Dennis Murray – Panel Chair.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. W. Murray'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail that extends downwards and to the right.

Michael Fanning – Independent Panel Member.

Karen Roberts – Independent Panel Member.

9th of October 2026.