

THAMES VALLEY POLICE

IN THE MATTER OF THE POLICE ACT 1996

AND

THE POLICE CONDUCT REGULATIONS 2020

AS AMENDED BY

THE POLICE (CONDUCT)(AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2024

NOTIFICATION OF FINDINGS AND OUTCOME: REGULATION 43 REPORT

Former PS 5662 COLIN PRICKETT

Hearing

1-5th June 2026

In person hearing at Thames Valley Police HQ, Kidlington, Oxfordshire

Panel

Chair: DCC Paul Mills QPM (Retired)

Independent panel member: Carolyn Graham

Independent panel member: Umar Butt

Legally Qualified Advisor (LQA): Jane Jones

Representatives

Counsel for Appropriate Authority: Isabel Delamere

Counsel for the former Officer: Ashraf Khan

Police Federation Friend: Nigel Snell

Decisions Summary

Most of the conduct specified in paragraphs 1 to 33 of the Regulation 30 Notice was proved, with significant exceptions. Conduct found included:

- Engaging in inappropriate and flirtatious conduct towards PCSO A in the workplace
- Providing a misleading account of a relationship to colleagues and line management
- Dishonestly saying that another PCSO was present when she was not
- Creating a conflict of interests and which impacted negatively on colleagues
- Failing to formally disclose a relationship with PCSO A when required

This conduct breached the Standards of Professional Behaviour in respect of Honesty and Integrity, Authority, Respect and Courtesy, Duties and Responsibilities and Discreditable Conduct.

The conduct overall amounted to Gross Misconduct.

The outcome was that the former Officer would have been Dismissed Without Notice had he still been serving.

A. Introduction

1. This is a record of the decision of a Police Misconduct Panel held under the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020, as amended in 2024. All references to the Regulations are to these regulations unless specified otherwise.
2. The proceedings relate to the conduct of former PS 5662 Colin Prickett. This Officer resigned in 2025, and his last day of service was 31st May 2025. He was therefore a former Officer at the time of the hearing and is referred to in this document as the “former Officer”.
3. This report has been drafted by the LQA but is adopted by the Chair. The Panel has had the opportunity to review and amend it. The Panel members understand that they are ultimately responsible for both the decisions they have made and the explanation of those decisions. The Panel have considered this case in detail and with great care, including taking an active role in questioning the live witnesses and the former Officer.
4. There may be slight differences between this written document as compared to any full transcript of the hearing. If that is the case, this written document should be regarded as the definitive version.
5. The misconduct hearing was conducted in person at Thames Valley Police HQ in Kidlington, Oxfordshire and lasted for five of the seven days allocated.
6. A public notice giving details of the hearing was published on the Thames Valley Police website in the usual way and for the requisite period. Members of the general public, including the media, were welcome to attend the proceedings, although none did so.
7. The former Officer was legally represented throughout these proceedings by Counsel. His Police Federation Friend was also present throughout. The former Officer did not attend all of the hearing but attended on parts of 4th and 5th June to

give his evidence and to be cross-examined. This was entirely his own choice, and he addressed the Panel on this point. An application by the Appropriate Authority to conduct the remainder of the proceedings in his absence was not opposed. The LQA gave advice on this, and the Panel was content to proceed in his absence.

8. Prior to the commencement of proceedings, further to an application by the AA, the chair provisionally granted one of the witnesses anonymity. This decision was published on the Thames Valley Police website and no representations were received therefore the decision was substantiated at the commencement of the hearing and the witness was referred to as PCSO A throughout the proceedings and in this document.

B. The Regime

9. The police misconduct regime was applied as follows:

- (i) The proceedings were conducted under the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020, the matter in question having come to the attention of the relevant Appropriate Authority after February 2020.
- (ii) The first tranche of the 2024 Police (Conduct) (Amendments) Regulations, principally affecting the constitution of the panel, is now in force. These proceedings were therefore chaired by a senior police officer (retired) because the Regulation 30 Notice was served after 7th May 2024.
- (iii) The second tranche of amendments came into force on 28th May 2025, in the form of the Police (Conduct, Performance and Complaints and Misconduct) (Amendment) Regulations 2025. The conduct in question here took place prior to the commencement date and was already the subject of investigation at this time, so Part 3 of the 2025 amendments (affecting outcome options) did not apply.
- (iv) Where proceedings concern a former officer, and the Regulation 30 Notice is not served until after 28th May 2025, the Schedule to the 2025 Regulations applies. The Schedule introduces the presumption of an accelerated hearing

for a former officer. In this particular case however, a full hearing took place because the matter was contested and the Special Conditions did not apply.

- (v) The relevant Home Office Guidance is the February 2020 version.
- (vi) The relevant Guidance on Outcomes is the 2023 version.
- (vii) The College of Policing's Code of Practice for Ethical Policing came into effect on 6th December 2023. This is guidance for senior officers and pre-dates the relevant conduct.
- (viii) The College of Policing's Guidance for Ethical Policing and Professional Behaviour in Policing and its Ethical Policing Principles were both published on 24th January 2024. These documents together replace the College of Policing's Code of Ethics and were available to officers at the time of the relevant conduct. They therefore apply.

C. Background

10. The former Officer was an experienced Sergeant with Thames Valley Police, undertaking one of the Sergeant roles on the South Neighbourhood Team in Milton Keynes. This team was split between a small office at Broughton and another at the Blue Light hub, West Ashland. At the start of the relevant timeline the former Officer was based at the Broughton office and the first line manager for PCSO A. He was generally well regarded and respected as a Sergeant.
11. PCSO A began her career as a PCSO at the Broughton office in 2021. Relative to former officer she was considerably younger in both service and age. This matter principally concerns the relationship that developed between them during 2024, how this was dealt with and how it impacted on colleagues.
12. In reaching its conclusions on findings of fact, breaches of the standards of professional behaviour and the level of misconduct, the Panel accorded with the College of Policing and NPCC guidance on appropriate relationships in the workplace. Accordingly, the panel was clear that there is nothing wrong with

colleagues engaging in relationships. There is however a requirement to recognise potential perceptions and conflicts, to disclose the existence of such relationships where relevant, and to facilitate the appropriate management of any organisational risks.

D. Pre-Hearing

13. A pre-hearing was held in private on Microsoft Teams on 27 April 2026.
14. Adherence to the time limits of the regulatory framework was confirmed. The matters in dispute were clarified, and it was confirmed that the former Officer did not accept that his conduct breached any of the Standards of Professional Behaviour, or that it amounted to misconduct or gross misconduct.
15. There were no outstanding issues regarding disclosure or editing. There were no preliminary legal arguments. It was confirmed that the hearing should be in public, and with public notice.
16. The Chair made a determination for six witnesses to attend the hearing to give live evidence. As previously detailed, an application for one of the witnesses to be referred to by cypher was subsequently the subject of written submissions, and later granted by the Chair (PCSO A).
17. No Equality Act issues were raised at any stage by or on behalf of the former Officer, either with regards to matters relevant to conduct or reasonable adjustments.

E. Allegations: The Appropriate Authority's position

18. The Appropriate Authority served a Regulation 30 Notice on the former Officer on 12 March 2026, and a very slightly amended version of this has since been provided, the amendments being non contentious. The full wording of the allegations appears under heading K below.
19. The Appropriate Authority's position was, broadly, that the former Officer formed an intimate relationship with a junior colleague, and this had led to conduct including:

- Engaging in inappropriate and flirtatious conduct towards PCSO A in the workplace
- Providing a dishonest and misleading account of his relationship with PCSO A to colleagues and line management
- Saying that another PCSO was present with him and PCSO A on an occasion when she was not
- Not basing himself where instructed
- Creating a conflict of interests which impacted negatively on colleagues
- Failing to formally disclose his relationship with PCSO A when he should have done so

20. The Appropriate Authority said that if the allegations were found proved the conduct would engage the Standards of Professional Conduct in respect of

- Honesty and Integrity
- Authority, Respect and Courtesy
- Duties and Responsibilities
- Discreditable Conduct

21. The Standards of Professional Behaviour are all set out in Schedule 2 of the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020, which states as follows:

- **Honesty and Integrity**
Police Officers are honest, act with integrity and do not compromise or abuse their position.
- **Authority, Respect and Courtesy**
Police officers act with self-control and tolerance, treating members of the public and colleagues with respect and courtesy.
- **Duties and Responsibilities**
Police officers are diligent in the exercise of their duties and responsibilities.
- **Discreditable Conduct**

Police officers behave in a manner which does not discredit the police service or undermine public confidence in it.

22. The Appropriate Authority's position was that if the allegations were proved, the conduct, both individually and collectively, was so serious as to amount to gross misconduct.

F. The former Officer's position

23. The former Officer was interviewed on 27th January 2025 and gave an account of his conduct.
24. On 2nd April 2026 the former Officer submitted a Regulation 31 Response. He confirmed the position as he had explained in his misconduct investigation interview. The evidence he gave during the hearing was also consistent with this.
25. His overall position was that whilst aspects of his conduct may have been open to criticism as overfamiliar, his actions did not amount to misconduct. In particular he denied that he acted dishonestly, that he abused his position, and that his conduct reached the threshold of gross misconduct, given the context and evolving nature of the relationship.
26. As the former Officer denied that he had breached the Standards as alleged and that his conduct amounted to gross misconduct, the Panel were required to make factual findings in relation to each of the allegations, conclude whether the Standards of Professional Behaviour had been breached as alleged and determine if any proven misconduct amounted to gross misconduct.
27. In relation to making findings of fact and assessing the alleged breaches of the Standards of Professional Behaviour, the Panel approached its task by reviewing the key evidence in the case, set against each element of the Regulation 30 notice.

G. Evidence considered

28. During the course of the hearing the Panel considered the whole bundle of written evidence presented in this case, all of which had been read in advance of the hearing. This included statements from five police officers and eight PCSOs.
29. The Appropriate Authority provided a comprehensive Opening Note, which was served in advance of the hearing, and opened the case in full during the hearing.
30. Six witnesses attended and gave live evidence in the course of the hearing. All were cross-examined and answered additional questions from the Panel.
31. In relation to the evidence of:
 - Inspector Vanderhoeven
 - PCSO Mills
 - PC Barker
 - PCSO Hawksworth
 - PCSO Jones

The Panel found each of the witnesses, to be straightforward, credible and consistent.

32. In relation to former PCSO A, the Panel found that at points her account lacked consistency and focus and this impacted on the credibility of her account.
33. In relation to the former Officer, the Panel found that at points his account lacked consistency and this impacted on the credibility of his account overall. The Panel found that there was also a degree of obfuscation particularly in relation to the former Officer's account of his knowledge of the concerns of his colleagues.

H. Summary of key Evidence to inform findings of fact

Evidence of Inspector 6366 Amy Vanderhoeven (now Chief Inspector)

34. The Panel reviewed the statements of Inspector Vanderhoeven and heard live evidence from her during the hearing.

35. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated that she commenced her role as the Neighbourhood Inspector for the South Neighbourhood team in Milton Keynes in September 2023. At this time the former Officer was one of the Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) Sergeants.
36. Inspector Vanderhoeven outlined the set-up of the policing buildings on her area, detailing there was the Broughton Police Office, which was adjoined to the Broughton Fire Station and five miles away there was a separate building called the Blue Light hub.
37. Inspector Vanderhoeven, stated that she became aware of numerous rumours concerning the relationship of the former Officer with PCSO A. She stated that at that point there was nothing tangible, but the rumours overlaid with concerns she had about the former Officer's management style and cultural issues between the Broughton policing location and the Blue Light Hub.
38. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated that a decision was made to increase the number of NPT Sergeants from two to three and it was decided that all three supervisors would be based at the Blue Light Hub location. She stated that the former Officer was resistant to these changes and she received feedback that he intended to 'fight this move every step of the way'. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated this was indicative of the former Officer's attitude towards the changes the leadership team were trying to introduce.
39. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated after a period of leave in August 2024, she returned to the office and became aware of a tense atmosphere. She detailed that the former Officer had sent an email to the entire NPT which had caused a degree of upset due to its tone. She outlined that over subsequent days she was approached by a number of members of the former Officer's team who expressed concerns relating to his intimidating attitude and also about his apparent relationship with PCSO A. In addition, she stated it was disclosed that the two of them had been seen to have physical contact on team nights out.

40. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated that she discussed the issues with her line manager, Chief Inspector Hewitt, and it was agreed that they should both meet with the former Officer concerning the issues raised.
41. Inspector Vanderhoeven outlined that this meeting took place on 28th August 2024. She stated that the former Officer was challenged about his leadership, and how it had led to members of his team feeling upset, anxious and intimidated. He was told such behaviour could not continue.
42. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated that during the meeting she discussed concerns that had been voiced about the former Officer's relationship with PCSO A. She stated that she asked him directly if he was in a relationship with PCSO A and he clearly stated that it was 'just a friendship'. She outlined how the former Officer detailed that he would sometimes go to the pub with PCSO A but stated that on each occasion PCSO Mills had been present.
43. During the hearing Inspector Vanderhoeven confirmed that she was categorical that the former Officer had stated that on each occasion he had gone to the pub, PCSO MILLS had been present.
44. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated that by the end of the meeting the former Officer was left in no doubt about expected Standards of Professional Behaviour and the expectation that he would disclose a relationship with any PCSO that he line-managed. She stated the former Officer was very firm that his relationship with PCSO A was nothing more than a friendship.
45. Inspector Vanderhoeven detailed that after the meeting the former Officer stated to her that his friendship with PCSO A was all 'above board'. He detailed that when he went to the pub, his partner would drop him off and PCSO A's mum would pick her up. She stated that he also stated that he had been recently thinking about his relationship with PCSO A and had re-checked the e-learning package relating to 'abuse of position of trust', and he was confident that he was doing nothing wrong.

Inspector Vanderhoeven stated she thought this was an odd comment to make if he was doing nothing wrong.

46. Inspector Vanderhoeven detailed that by October 2024 the third additional Sergeant was due to join the NPT, and she met with the former Officer and his colleague to discuss how the teams would be sub-divided. She stated that during this meeting she told him that PCSO A would be moved from his line management, due to his friendship with her and the perception of team members. Also, that from October 2024 he was required to be based at the Blue Light Hub. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated the former Officer was reluctant to hand over any line management responsibilities and wished to maintain the existing arrangements.
47. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated that on 27th November 2024, she had to speak to the former Officer again concerning working from the Blue Light Hub, as it was clear that he had no intention of moving. She stated that she directed that by the following Monday he was required to move to the new location. She detailed that eventually the former Officer did move to the new station, but he was vocally stating he was not happy he had been posted to the location.
48. Inspector Vanderhoeven outlined that by December 2024, she was regularly hearing information concerning the inappropriate relationship between PCSO A and the former Officer, however she had nothing tangible to act upon. She detailed that she had intended to speak with PCSO A. On 15th December 2024 Chief Inspector Hewitt called her to say that she had become aware that the former Officer had conducted a meeting with his team where he reprimanded them for gossiping and had told them that he was now in a relationship with PCSO A.
49. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated she was aware that matters were being referred to PSD, and she decided to deal with the issues after the Christmas break.
50. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated that on 30th December 2024, she decided to speak separately to both the PCSO A and the former Officer.
51. Inspector Vanderhoeven outlined that in the meeting with PCSO A, she asked her directly if she was in an intimate relationship with the former Officer. Inspector

Vanderhoeven said that PCSO A refused to confirm whether or not they were in an intimate relationship, stating that it was 'private'. Inspector Vanderhoeven detailed that PCSO A described that the relationship had 'no label' but they would spend time together.

52. Inspector Vanderhoeven detailed that PCSO A stated it was not her understanding that the former Officer had brought the team together to tell them off about gossiping or had disclosed that they were in a relationship. PCSO A detailed that she was fed up with the gossip and said the only behaviour shown at work was when her and the former Officer had lunch and dinner together when on duty. She further stated that she did not believe she had been the subject of any favouritism, nor did she feel uncomfortable with any aspect of the relationship.
53. Inspector Vanderhoeven outlined that PCSO A stated that the impact of the gossip had made her not want to come to work.
54. Inspector Vanderhoeven, stated after meeting with PCSO A, the same day she met with the former Officer. She stated that she shared with him the NPCC guidance about appropriate workplace relationships, including the obligation to disclose relationships that create a conflict, detailing that relationships between line managers and staff will always create a conflict. The former Officer stated that he was not aware of the guidance.
55. During the hearing, Inspector Vanderhoeven stated that it was her expectation that any officer in a supervisory position, regardless of their knowledge of policy or procedure, would be fully aware of their responsibilities to disclose a relationship with someone within their line management chain.
56. Inspector Vanderhoeven outlined that the former Officer 'danced around' the issue of whether they were in a relationship, stating there was 'no label' and 'we like spending time together'. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated that due to the similarity in the response from PCSO A, she felt there may have been some coaching on what to say if asked about the relationship.

57. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated that she then proceeded to ask the former Officer directly if he was in an intimate relationship with PCSO A and he subsequently responded that he was. He then stated that he felt it was not anyone's business and Inspector Vanderhoeven told him there was a distinct difference between spending time with a colleague and sleeping with them, which he confirmed he understood.
58. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated she told the former Officer that it had become a workplace issue as other colleagues had become aware of it. The former Officer stated that he had only had lunches with PCSO A and he had not given her any preferential treatment.
59. Inspector Vanderhoeven detailed that at the end of the conversation she told the former Officer that his position on the team had become untenable, and she did not feel that the relationship with PCSO A could be professionally managed in the workplace. She stated that she told him to have as little as possible to do with PCSO A in the workplace until a plan could be devised to manage the situation.
60. The Panel noted that Inspector Vanderhoeven captured the notes of the conversations with the former Officer and PCSO A and sent them to Chief Inspector Hewitt and Chief Inspector Sully on 2nd January 2025. (Exhibit AJV/02).
61. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated post the meetings, she then spoke to different team members about the relationship between the former Officer and PCSO A. She outlined that she was shocked, when they disclosed that they had become fearful of repercussions from the former Officer, they felt anxious and some of them detailed they had considered leaving the organisation as a direct result of the former Officer's behaviour and to a lesser extent that of PCSO A. In addition, during the hearing Inspector Vanderhoeven stated the impact of the relationship between the former Officer and PCSO A had been significant. She stated team members disclosed to her they felt PCSO A was receiving preferential treatment and that the former Officer and PCSO A were discussing information about colleagues in what was termed 'pillow talk'.

62. Inspector Vanderhoeven disclosed that she was particularly concerned about the attitude of the former Officer towards PCSO Hawksworth, who he appeared to be jealous of. She stated that at one point she was actually concerned the attitude of the former Officer was such that it could escalate into violence towards PCSO Hawksworth.
63. Inspector Vanderhoeven detailed that colleagues had disclosed they were worried that the former Officer had been controlling PCSO A. Inspector Vanderhoeven also outlined that during these disclosures many of the persons spoken to had been highly anxious and some had become emotional.
63. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated the behaviour of the former Officer fell far below the standards she would expect from a Sergeant, and she had seen first-hand the detrimental impact that it had on individuals and the team overall.
64. The Panel noted that Inspector Vanderhoeven provided summary notes of the disclosures which were made to her (Exhibit AJV/03).
65. The Panel noted Inspector Vanderhoeven provided a further statement and confirmed that on 14th October 2024, due to structural changes, PS Holmes became the second line manager for PCSO A. She detailed that whilst the former Officer was not the direct line manager for PCSO A from this point, he would still be responsible for fairly allocating her work.

Evidence of Inspector Chief Inspector Jade Hewitt

66. The panel reviewed the statement of Chief Inspector Hewitt and noted the following:
67. Chief Inspector Hewitt confirmed she had been present in the meeting with Inspector Vanderhoeven and the former Officer, which had taken place on 24th August 2024.
68. Chief Inspector Hewitt stated that a conversation had taken place with the former Officer concerning his performance and conduct towards members of his team. At the end of the meeting, she stated that Inspector Vanderhoeven informed him that they had received information that he was in a relationship with PCSO A, and she

described that he ‘scoffed at this, saying that it was a friendship and people were wrong’.

69. Chief Inspector Hewitt stated she asked the former Officer directly if he was in a relationship with PCSO A and he replied ‘no, we’re just friends’. Chief Inspector Hewitt outlined that both her and Inspector Vanderhoeven advised him about the expected leadership boundaries.

70. Chief Inspector Hewitt outlined that after the meeting she said to Inspector Vanderhoeven that she did not believe that the former Officer was not in a relationship with PCSO A, and she wanted him to be moved to ensure appropriate boundaries were in place. It was therefore agreed that the former Officer would be immediately moved to the Blue Light Hub to address the unacceptable culture on his team.

Evidence of PCSO MILLS

71. The Panel reviewed the statement of PCSO Mills and heard live evidence from her during the hearing.

72. PCSO Mills confirmed that from June 2023 she had been a member of the team supervised by the former Officer, and she had been tutored by PCSO A when she first joined the team.

73. PCSO Mills stated that further to being tutored by PCSO A, they had become good friends and would regularly crew together.

74. PCSO Mills stated that in December 2023 she attended a team Christmas Party and had observed the former Officer and PCSO A holding hands. Further, that whilst playing pool the former Officer had bent over on top of PCSO A when she was taking a shot.

75. PCSO Mills stated she had witnessed the former Officer flirting with PCSO A, and this included them sitting together and giggling, and they would cook each other dinner and buy lunches. She stated that she observed the former Officer playfully pushing PCSO A over or kicking her and on one occasion he had picked her up such

that her bottom was directly in his face. She described the behaviour to be similar to that which you might expect to see from a couple in a partnership.

76. PCSO Mills detailed that on a night out in January 2024 she witnessed the former Officer and PCSO A engaged in a kiss. PCSO Mills stated she later spoke to PCSO A about the kiss and PCSO A told her she did not see anything wrong with it they were outside of work, she was consenting and was happy with the relationship.

77. PCSO Mills stated that the flirtatious behaviour continued at work and it became the norm in the office.

78. PCSO Mills outlined that in April 2024, PCSO Jones had spoken to her about concerns she had about the relationship between the former Officer and PCSO A. PCSO Mills stated that PCSO Jones asked her to speak to PCSO A about the concerns, which she subsequently did. PCSO Mills detailed that PCSO A responded that she felt people were getting involved in her business and gossiping.

79. PCSO Mills outlined that the day after she had spoken to PCSO A, the former Officer called her and other colleagues into the office and told them that he was not sleeping with PCSO A, and they were just good friends.

80. PCSO Mills detailed that on 12th May 2024, PCSO A had told her that she was meeting the former Officer and a couple of his friends at a public house whilst off duty. PCSO Mills stated at the time it was her understanding the former Officer was still in a relationship with his partner. PCSO MILLS provided a picture of the former Officer and PCSO A together at the pub, which the former Officer sent her. (Exhibit EM1).

81. PCSO Mills stated that at some point the former Officer spoke to her and related how, during a meeting with the Inspector, he had said that when he met with PCSO A at the pub, she had also been present. PCSO Mills stated the former Officer said the reason he had said this was because he believed 'it looks better'.

82. PCSO Mills categorically stated she had never been present on any occasion when the former Officer and PCSO A had met outside of work. She stated she felt very

conflicted that her supervisor had said she had been present and she did not want to lie for them.

83. During the hearing she further stated that she was concerned that she would get into trouble and the situation had made her worry.
84. PCSO Mills stated that in September 2024, she went on holiday with PCSO A and she asked her about her relationship with the former Officer. She was told they were just good friends and would spend time together outside of work.
85. PCSO Mills stated that she was aware that round October/November 2024 the former Officer had separated from his partner and this led to him spending more time with PCSO A on rest days.
86. PCSO Mills stated that on one occasion the former Officer had shown her examples of lingerie that had appeared on his phone. He had said this was because he had been looking online for sexy underwear to buy for PCSO A for her birthday and Christmas. He further said that he had bought her such underwear when they went to London.
87. PCSO Mills stated in October 2024, whilst on an Operation Sceptre duty she was crewed with PCSO A, but ended up becoming single crewed, because the former Officer and PCSO A had dinner together. She stated that colleagues raised concerns that she had been left to crew on her own. She stated that PC Barker had attempted to crew her with other colleagues, however, the former Officer had said not to as PCSO A would be re-joining her. PCSO Mills stated that PCSO A did not return to patrol and she remained single crewed whilst PCSO A spent the rest of the shift in the office with the former Officer.
88. PCSO Mills stated that in around October/November 2024 the former Officer was posted to the Blue Light Hub. However, it appeared he refused to move and did not ultimately go to the new location until early December 2024. PCSO Mills stated that on a few occasions after this when she was crewed with PCSO A, she wanted to go to the Blue Light Hub for refreshments so she could be with the former Officer. She stated this caused friction between PCSO A and her, as this was not a location where they had ever taken their refreshments before the former Officer moved there.

89. PCSO Mills detailed that on one occasion she had been present at the Blue Light hub with PCSO A, the former Officer and other colleagues. She stated that the former Officer sat down next to PCSO A and he put his feet up on her and made a suggestive dirty joke concerning the nature of a stain which was on PCSO A's trousers. She stated the interaction made her and her colleague feel uncomfortable and they left the location shortly afterwards.
90. PCSO Mills stated that around early December 2024, she challenged PCSO A about the nature of her relationship with the former Officer and she then admitted she had stayed over a few times and been intimate with him.
91. PCSO Mills stated that during one shift the former Officer had gone out in his personal car to get some lunch and was involved in a road traffic collision. Other police colleagues attended this but PCSO A, who she was crewed with, insisted they also attended. She described that PCSO A and the former Officer hugged at the side of the road in front of the member of the public who would have known they were both in the police. PCSO Mills stated that she found this to be totally inappropriate.
92. PCSO Mills stated that after the road traffic collision, she returned to the Broughton Police Station and heard PCSO A and the former Officer kissing inside the station. She stated she stood by the door where she could hear the kissing and asked if her colleagues 'were done yet' and the former officer and PCSO A came out laughing and he said, 'Yeah we're done now'.
93. PCSO Mills detailed on another occasion she had witnessed the former Officer call PCSO A 'baby' in the office in front of other colleagues. She detailed that PCSO A had told the former Officer he should not call her that in front of other people.
94. PCSO Mills stated that in around December 2024 she decided to share her growing concerns about the relationship between the former Officer and PCSO A with PS Neilson. She stated that prior to this she had been reluctant to share her concerns, due to the previous negative behaviour of the former Officer and she was worried he would treat her differently in the workplace.

95. During the hearing PCSO Mills stated that prior to the Christmas party in December 2023, the relationship between the former Officer and PCSO A had been normal. She said that after the party things noticeably changed between the two of them and concerns started to grow that they were in a relationship.

Evidence of PC 1842 Paige Barker (now Grady)

96. The panel reviewed the statement of PC Barker and heard live evidence from her during the hearing.
97. PC Barker stated that she commenced her role as a Neighbourhood constable on the former Officer's team in July 2024. Her role was to take over the line management of PCSO A and PCSO Mills, who were at the time supervised by the former Officer. She stated that the former Officer was reluctant to give up his supervision of both PCSOs and she formed the opinion there appeared to be a 'bit of a clique' between them. She stated that for the first couple of months she could not perform her role properly as the former Officer kept on managing the two PCSO's and appeared reluctant to relinquish his supervisory responsibility.
98. PC Barker stated that she noted that the former Officer and PCSO A would either buy food or make food together and PCSO Mills would always get her own.
99. PC Barker stated that she noticed that the former Officer was quite protective over PCSO A, citing examples of where if she felt unwell or was injured, he would get medicine for her or plasters, and he did not appear to do this for others on the team.
100. PC Barker stated that in around August 2024, she became aware that the former Officer had separated from his partner and it was from this point onwards that his behaviour towards PCSO A became more obvious. She stated that his behaviour towards PCSO A was more romantic and caring than it appeared to be with other members of the team.
101. PC Barker confirmed the Operation Sceptre incident detailed by PCSO Mills, which occurred in November 2024. PC Barker detailed that PCSO Mills was left single crewed as a result of the former Officer and PCSO A having dinner together. PC

Barker stated she attempted to crew PCSO Mills with two other colleagues but was told this was not required by the former Officer, as PCSO A would shortly return to patrol. She stated that as PCSO A did not actually return to the ongoing operation but remained in the police station, the incident had prompted much discussion amongst colleagues about the relationship.

102. PC Barker stated that Operation Sceptre was a knife related operation and she was concerned that PCSO Mills was left alone, because PCSO's have no Personal Protective Equipment and were patrolling in hot spot locations for knife offences. Accordingly, she would have preferred that PCSO Mills was crewed with a colleague.

103. PC Barker stated that in November 2024 she became aware that some team members were planning a trip to Birmingham and PCSO A had attempted to book the time off to go, but the former Officer did not want her to go. She stated shortly after this there was an incident where she attempted to speak to PCSO A as she was concerned the former Officer was unduly influencing her. PC Barker said that PCSO A became upset and angry during this conversation, as she believed everyone was talking about her and thereafter, she became more distant from the team.

104. PC Barker outlined that shortly after the former Officer had been posted to the Blue Light Hub, he had asked to speak to her about the concerns she had concerning his relationship with PCSO A. She stated that the former Officer told her they enjoyed spending time together and would spend at least one rest day together. When asked if they were 'seeing each other' he told her they had not put a label on things and had not discussed what they were. She stated she asked him if the 'bosses were aware' and he responded 'yeah, that is why I am here' indicating that was why he had been moved to a different station. PC Barker outlined that she could not remember exactly what the former Officer said, but he indicated she could tell the team about his relationship with PCSO A.

105. PC Barker stated she initially did not say anything to the team about the relationship, but she was told a couple of days later by PCSO Mills that PCSO A had told her that the former Officer had given the go ahead to tell the team about the relationship. PC Barker detailed that she had a few individual conversations with colleagues and told them that the former Officer had told her that the 'bosses were aware of the

relationship' and this appeared to thereafter limit the conversation about the relationship.

Evidence of Former PCSO A

106. The panel reviewed the statement of former PCSO A and heard live evidence from her during the hearing.

107. PCSO A outlined that she had started in her PCSO role in September 2021 and her immediate line manager then was PC Childs and her second line manager was the former Officer.

108. PCSO A stated that she had attended a Christmas party around November 2023 and from that point onwards she started to become friendlier with the former Officer.

109. PCSO A stated that in January 2024 the former Officer, her and other colleagues had attended a leaving party for a colleague. At the party both she and the former Officer had consumed alcohol, and she had instigated a kiss with him. She stated she should not have done so, and the next day they spoke about the kiss, which he could not remember due to his intoxication. PCSO A stated that she was aware that PCSO Mills and PCSO Hawksworth had seen the kiss.

110. PCSO A stated that she continued to speak with the former Officer in social settings and away from work, but there was no relationship between them other than friendship. She stated that they would sit and have lunch together sometimes and they would on occasion buy each other food. She stated they did not exclude others but believed it was around this time that colleagues started to talk about their relationship.

111. PCSO A confirmed that she had formerly been in a relationship which had ended in November 2023.

112. PCSO A stated that on one occasion she became aware that PCSO Jones had approached PCSO Mills and had said to her that the former Officer and her would lunch together and would laugh. PCSO A outlined that she spoke to PCSO Jones and said that she should bring her concerns directly to her or a line manager if she had an issue.

113. PCSO A stated that during the summer of 2024, she did meet the former Officer and some of his friends outside of work for a drink. She stated that on one occasion other colleagues had been invited but did not attend. She stated that on no occasion had PCSO Mills joined such meetings.
114. PCSO A stated that things progressed with the former Officer and they started to go out for meals and drinks in late September 2024 and in early October 2024, after the former Officer moved into his own flat, they started to be intimate. She stated they were never formally together as a couple.
115. PCSO A outlined that on 22nd November she had a day out with her dad but knew that colleagues were aware that both she and the former Officer had taken time off on the same day and they incorrectly believed they were together. She had to send PCSO Mills a photo of her with her dad to show what she was really doing. She stated on another occasion, when team members were looking to go for a day out in Birmingham, she decided not to go because she was aware that colleagues were talking about her and the former Officer.
116. PCSO A detailed that she decided not to go to the team Christmas party in 2024, as she did not want colleagues to talk about her and the former Officer and draw conclusions.
117. PCSO A stated on 9th December 2024, she had met with PCSO Mills for a brunch and PCSO Mills had questioned her about the relationship with the former Officer. She stated that in the past when PCSO Mills had asked similar questions she had not disclosed anything to her as she wished to keep her personal life private and away from work. She stated that during the meal, PCSO Mills had told her that PCSO Hawksworth had seen her car outside the former Officer's flat, and it became clear that she could not deny the relationship between them anymore.
118. PCSO A that stated at the point she told PCSO Mills about the relationship with the former Officer, nobody else had asked her directly if she was in a relationship with him or raised any concerns. She stated that outside of work her family and friends

were aware of the relationship and she had been concerned how they would react due to the age difference, but they were accepting of this. She stated that the relationship with the former Officer had always been consensual and she had never felt under any pressure from him.

119. PCSO A stated that on 30th December 2024, she was asked to meet with Inspector Vanderhoeven. During the meeting, she stated the Inspector told her that she had received a telephone call informing her that the former Officer had announced to the team that they were in a relationship. PCSO A stated she told the Inspector that she did not believe this was the case as they had never labelled it as a relationship.

120. PCSO A stated that she had found the rumours concerning her relationship with the former Officer difficult to manage and she had distanced herself from other team members. She stated she did not know why people had an issue with her relationship with the former Officer and did not believe that she had been treated more favourably by him. She stated that the former Officer was not responsible for any allocation of her work and whilst he may be responsible for crewing sometimes, they would only be crewed together about once a month when operational needs necessitated it.

Evidence of PCSO Craig Hawksworth

121. The panel reviewed the statement of former PCSO Hawksworth and heard live evidence from him during the hearing.

122. PCSO Hawksworth stated that in January 2024, he had attended a leaving 'do' for a colleague and the former Officer and PCSO A were present. He stated during the evening he concluded there was 'something going on' between the two colleagues. He stated there was a lot of physical contact between them and he saw the former Officer bend over her whilst he was helping her play a game of pool.

123. PCSO Hawksworth stated that it was his belief that PCSO A would receive preferential treatment from the former Officer at work, which included giving her priority over vehicles or giving her taskings which meant she had to stay in the office.

124. PCSO Hawksworth stated that on one occasion he had been crewed with PCSO Colborne and they had travelled to the Broughton police station. He stated as they

pulled up at the station, PC Colborne said to him he seen through a window that PCSO A and the former Officer were cuddling. PCSO Hawksworth stated he had not seen this himself but recalled PC Colborne asking him if he had.

125. PCSO Hawksworth stated he lived near to the former officer and whilst out running he had on a few occasions seen PCSO A's car outside of the former Officer's address. He stated that this informed his view that the two of them were having a relationship.

126. PCSO Hawksworth stated that the atmosphere at Broughton police station had become very fraught and whereas in the past he would have told the former Officer about any welfare concerns, he decided not to do so as he was concerned it would get back to PCSO A as 'pillow talk'.

Evidence of PCSO 9812 Tracey Jones

127. The panel reviewed the statement of former PCSO Jones and heard live evidence from her during the hearing.

128. PCSO Jones confirmed that she had been a member of the former Officer's team and had tutored PCSO A when she first joined.

129. PCSO Jones stated that further to tutoring PCSO A, they had continued to crew together, and she would describe her as a friend.

130. PCSO Jones stated she attended a works Christmas party in 2023 and during the evening she described that the former Officer and PCSO A appeared to be inseparable. She stated she also observed him bend over the top of PCSO A whilst they were playing pool and she thought the behaviour was 'not right'.

131. PCSO Jones stated that after the Christmas party she noticed the relationship between the former Officer and PCSO A started to change. She stated that at some point the former Officer made the decision that PCSO's should not crew with PC's; however, he then starting to crew himself with PCSO A 2-3 times per set of shifts.

132. PCSO Jones stated that it felt as though the former Officer was manipulating the crewing's so he could be with PCSO A. She also stated that she witnessed that even

when they were not crewed together, they would routinely have lunch breaks on their own. PCSO Jones stated that they would bring food in for each other and PCSO A would sometimes prepare food from home, which she would serve up for the former Officer.

133. PCSO Jones stated she had become aware that on one occasion the former Officer had picked up PCSO A and her family whilst she was off duty in a marked police car after they had attended a social event.

134. PCSO Jones outlined that on one occasion PCSO A was on her hands and knees picking some dropped things off the floor and the former Officer came over and pushed her over by placing his foot on her backside. PCSO Jones stated that the former Officer and PCSO A all laughed. However, she had found the behaviour uncomfortable.

135. PCSO Jones stated that the nature of the interactions between the former Officer and PCSO A were such that it caused team members to discuss the likelihood of them being in a relationship. She also stated that she felt uncomfortable that the former Officer was in his early fifties and PCSO A was in her early twenties.

136. PCSO JONES outlined that at around Easter 2024, the former Officer spoke to her concerning the gossip on the team about the nature of his relationship with PCSO A. He stated he was not in a relationship with PCSO A and apologised when PCSO Jones told him their behaviour was making the team feel uncomfortable.

137. PCSO Jones stated that on one occasion PCSO A approached her and told her that she was not in a relationship with the former Officer. PCSO Jones stated that after this, PCSO A started to withdraw from the team and, along with the former Officer, did not take part in established events such as end of shift team meals. PCSO Jones outlined that this also caused operational difficulties, as PCSO A would avoid her even if they were crewed together and would take the police vehicle out on her own.

138. PCSO Jones stated that it was her opinion that even though both the former Officer and PCSO A denied they were in a relationship, it was her view and that of some colleagues that they were.

139. PCSO Jones stated that on one occasion whilst sat in the office PCSO A had her foot between the legs of the former Officer and he was cleaning her boots. PCSO Jones stated that she found this odd behaviour from her Sergeant, who did not clean the boots of any other team members.

140. PCSO Jones stated that the former Officer would refer to PCSO A as his PA.

141. PCSO Jones stated the former Officer would make out that the team were wrong in their belief that he and PCSO A were having an affair and this made things very uncomfortable as it was clear they were actually in a relationship.

142. PCSO Jones stated eventually PC Barker, approached her and told her that the former Officer had given his permission to confirm to other team members that he and PCSO A were in fact in a relationship.

143. PCSO Jones stated that the whole prolonged situation concerning this relationship had made her feel very anxious and uncomfortable. She stated there was both a power and age imbalance between the former Officer and PCSO A and she expected a higher level of professional conduct. She stated that she had lost trust in the former Officer as he had lied and was conducting his relationship within an office environment.

144. PCSO Jones stated the impact of the situation was such that she had considered moving departments or leaving the job entirely.

Evidence of PCSO 9968 Barton

145. The panel reviewed the statement of PCSO Barton.

146. PCSO Barton stated that towards the end of 2023 he noticed that there was a change in relationship between the former Officer and PCSO A. He stated that the former Officer would routinely speak about PCSO A and they would crew together, sometimes

two to three times in a set of shifts. He detailed that it was unusual for a Sergeant to crew with a PCSO in this manner.

147. PCSO Barton confirmed the incident had taken place where the former Officer was cleaning the boots of PCSO A, and afterwards colleagues had commented that he did not polish anyone else's boots.

148. PCSO Barton stated that it was noticeable that the former Officer and PCSO A would eat together and this became normalised behaviour.

149. PCSO Barton stated that on one occasion the former Officer had brought the team together and had stated that he and PCSO A were not in a relationship. PCSO Barton stated that based on what he had witnessed this was not how things looked to him.

150. PCSO Barton stated that he heard the former Officer call PCSO A his staff officer and his behaviour generally appeared to be geared towards her.

151. PCSO Barton stated there was a clear and obvious attraction between the former Officer and PCSO A and it was not hidden in the office environment. He detailed that if one of them went into the kitchen area the other would follow shortly afterwards and PCSO Barton would stay out of the kitchen as he would not wish to walk in on anything.

Evidence of PCSO 9911 Wenn

152. The panel reviewed the statement of former PCSO Wenn.

153. PCSO Wenn confirmed that she had witnessed similar behaviour between the former Officer and PCSO A. She described flirty behaviour between them and the former Officer being very attentive to PCSO A, buying her food and ensuring that she always had a police vehicle.

154. PCSO Wenn described witnessing quite a lot of touching between the couple, such as them giving cuddles and she found this uncomfortable and unprofessional.

155. PCSO Wenn stated that it was her opinion that the former Officer was besotted with PCSO A – this included making sure his locker was next to hers and also writing her birthday and that of her mother on the office whiteboard.

156. PCSO Wenn stated that she had discussed concerns with colleagues and it was her view that the former Officer had groomed PCSO A since she had started on his team.

Evidence of PCSO Vytaute KUBILIUTE

67. The panel reviewed the statement of former PCSO Kubiliute.

68. PCSO Kubiliute stated that he joined the team in February 2024 and immediately noticed that the former Officer and PCSO A were close and he became aware that there were rumours that they were in a relationship together.

69. PCSO Kubiliute stated he noticed how the former Officer and PCSO A would smile and whisper together and liked getting each other food. He also observed the incident where the former Officer was polishing her boots.

70. PCSO Kubiliute recalled a time where the former Officer told PCSO A to go back to his flat to get some food as she had not eaten.

71. PCSO Kubiliute stated that he became aware that it was confirmed the two colleagues were in a relationship in December 2024, when they did not come to the Christmas party and he was told they were on a date.

Evidence of PCSO Paul Colborne

72. The panel reviewed the statement of former PCSO Colborne.

73. PCSO Colborne stated that he was based at Fishermead police station and was aware of the gossip concerning the couple being in a relationship but kept a distance from it.

74. PCSO Colborne stated that sometime in the summer of 2024 he had visited Broughton police station and had parked his car and walked over towards the office. He stated that he looked through a window in the kitchen and could see the former Officer and PCSO A and they were talking and then started to hug. He detailed that the two of them then saw him and quickly separated.

75. PCSO Colborne stated that he told PCSO Hawksworth about the incident.

Account of the former Officer

76. The Panel reviewed the PSD interview of the former Officer, his Regulation 31 Response and the live evidence given by him during the course of the hearing. The former Officer's specific response to each allegation is summarised in the First Stage Findings section of this report (K).
77. The Panel noted that the former Officer was of previous good character and considered this when assessing the credibility of his evidence set against the wider available evidence.
78. The panel noted that the former Officer accepted that the kiss between PCSO A and him had taken place in January 2024, however due to intoxication, he was only aware of it because he was told by PCSO A a few days later.
79. The Panel noted that the former Officer stated that his relationship with PCSO A had started as friends. However, this had evolved into something more intimate by late September/early October 2024. The former Officer denied that any intimacy had taken place prior to this and maintained that the relationship had developed slowly over time.
80. The Panel noted that the former Officer accepted that further to the relationship becoming intimate, he should have disclosed it to his supervisors. The former Officer disputed however that he should have disclosed the relationship prior to September/early October 2024.
81. The Panel noted the former Officer disputed that his workplace conduct towards PCSO A was inappropriate or preferential as alleged. He stated that:
- His interactions with PCSO A were consistent with his general approach to team management, which involved supporting colleagues, including during periods of emotional distress.
 - Physical contact (such as occasional consoling) was not unique to PCSO A and occurred with other team members where appropriate.

- Allegations of regular or inappropriate physical contact were exaggerated and taken out of context.
- Shared meals and informal interactions were common across the team and not indicative of preferential treatment.
- Operational decisions, including crewing and vehicle use, were made based on legitimate operational considerations, including safety and deployment needs, and were not motivated by personal favour.

82. The Panel noted the former Officer accepted that, with hindsight, certain aspects of his conduct may have been over-familiar but denied that they amounted to misconduct as alleged.

83. The Panel noted that the former Officer, did not accept that his conduct adversely impacted the team. He stated that he treated all team members fairly and consistently and any perceptions that arose were influenced by assumptions and speculation, rather than the reality of his conduct.

84. The Panel noted that the former Officer denied that he had acted dishonestly or without integrity. He stated:

- At the time of the meeting with his Inspector on 28 August 2024, the relationship with PCSO A had not developed into an intimate or clearly defined relationship.
- He did not consider that there was a relationship requiring disclosure at that time.
- He did not accept that he was asked questions in the terms now alleged, and his recollection is that questions were framed more generally around friendships within the team.
- His responses reflected his genuine understanding and recollection at the time, including the informal and evolving nature of the relationship.
- The January 2024 kiss was not mentioned as he did not consider it significant and had not recalled it as a meaningful event at the time.
- Any reference to social meetings involving others was not intended to mislead but reflected his recollection of occasions where colleagues had been present.
- To the extent that any answers were incomplete or imprecise, this was not a deliberate attempt to mislead, but a consequence of:
 - the informal and evolving nature of the relationship;

- the absence of a clear “label” at the time; and
- the officer’s understanding of the questions being asked.

85. The Panel noted that the former Officer did not accept that he had breached any policy as he stated there was no evidence of any abuse of position for a sexual or improper purpose. He stated that the relationship was consensual, developed over time and there was no evidence of coercion, manipulation or exploitation.

College of Policing Guidance – Appropriate personal relationships and behaviours in the workplace (2019)

86. The Panel reviewed and noted the College of Policing Guidance – Appropriate personal relationships and behaviours in the workplace (2019). The panel considered the following sections of the guidance to be relevant:

.. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the [Code of Ethics](#) which also addresses the potential impact that any relationship at work can have in terms of creating an actual or apparent conflict of interest.

87. Paragraph 6: *Appropriate workplace relationships*

..... In determining whether or not a relationship creates any negative impact on the legitimate aims of policing, the following factors could be considered:

- *a power imbalance is not used to initiate, control or maintain the personal relationship*
- *physical and intimate relations do not take place on duty, or off duty on police premises including police vehicles*

88. Paragraph 7 - *Avoiding conflicts of interest and seeking guidance*

*.... Conflicts can occur in the following cases:
line-management activity...*

89. Paragraph 9 - ***Relationships involving tutors, line managers and senior officers***

Where a relationship involves any power imbalance, such as with tutors, trainers, line managers and senior officers, then it will always have the potential for a conflict of interest. These relationships should be carefully considered by the individuals involved and, if appropriate, guidance sought. Where a conflict of interest exists that would have an adverse impact on the service, the perception of the public of the service, or any individual, necessary and proportionate steps should be taken to ensure that the conflict is mitigated or other appropriate action taken depending on the facts of the case (for example reallocation of a tutor, or change in line manager).

90. Additionally, the Panel bore in mind the descriptors in the Standards of Professional Behaviour relating to Authority, Respect and Courtesy which states:

According to this standard you must:

carry out your role and responsibilities in an efficient, diligent and professional manner avoid any behaviour that might impair your effectiveness or damage either your own reputation or that of policing ensure that any relationship at work does not create an actual or apparent conflict of interest not engage in sexual conduct or other inappropriate behaviour when on duty

Thames Valley Police – Abuse of Position for Sexual or Emotional Gain and Professional Boundaries Policy (2020)

91. The Panel reviewed and noted the Thames Valley Police’s Abuse of position for Sexual or Emotional Gain and Professional Boundaries Policy. The Panel considered the professional boundaries section to be particularly relevant to the matters under consideration:

4.0 Professional Boundaries

4.1 If a staff member forms a relationship with a colleague at work they must carefully consider and ensure that there is not a ‘power imbalance’ and that the

relationship is not impacting on their ability to perform their role effectively and fairly and couldn't be perceived in this way by others e.g.

- Treat everyone fairly - allocating tasks, leave and training opportunities etc.*
- Act impartially e.g. fairly recommending individuals for promotion, acting opportunities and PDR assessment;*
- Not share confidential information with a partner about other team members.*

4.2 Staff often perceive an element of unfairness or are suspicious of relationships within a team or department involving a manager and a member of the team. This is because there is often an imbalance of power which can lead to abuse of position or perceived abuse of authority. A member of staff may not feel they can say "no" where the relationship involves a more senior member of staff, or if they were to say no feel it may have an impact on their career or role. It is important that staff consider reporting such a relationship to managers or PSD to ensure transparency.

I. Approach to decision making

92. These proceedings were held to determine whether the conduct of the former Officer breached any Standards of Professional Behaviour, whether such conduct amounted to misconduct, gross misconduct or indeed neither, and whether disciplinary action should be imposed. The approach taken by the panel was to:

- (i) Firstly, ascertain the facts, bearing in mind what was and what was not in dispute
- (ii) Determine, on the basis of those facts, whether any Standards of Professional Behaviour had been breached
- (iii) Then to decide whether any breach as found amounted to Misconduct, Gross Misconduct or indeed neither.
- (iv) As appropriate, to decide what the outcome should be.

J. Burden and Standard of Proof

93. In making decisions the Panel was mindful of the fact that the burden of proving the case was on the Appropriate Authority.
94. The standard of proof applied by the Panel was the balance of probabilities, the civil standard. Conduct will be proved on the balance of probabilities if the Panel is satisfied by the evidence that it is more likely than not that the conduct occurred. The balance of probabilities is a single unvarying standard. The Panel understood that the seriousness of the allegations and/or the seriousness of the consequences for the Officer do not require a different standard of proof, merely careful consideration by the Panel before it is satisfied of the matters which have to be established. The inherent probability or improbability of the conduct occurring is itself a matter to be taken into account when deciding whether, on the balance of probabilities, the conduct occurred. (as per section 9.10 Home Office Guidance)

K. First Stage Findings

95. Having considered all the available evidence, the panel concluded the following in relation to each paragraph of the Regulation 30 notice:
1. *From 2 August 2021 you were a Neighbourhood Sergeant for the South Neighbourhood Team and you were usually based in the Broughton Police Office.*
 2. *From September 2021 PCSO A started working as a PCSO for the South Neighbourhood Team, based at Broughton Police Office, and you became PCSO A's second line-manager.*
 3. *On 24 March 2022, you received Reflective Practice on 24 March 2022 regarding your conduct towards female colleagues.*
 4. *On 25 January 2023 you completed training on "Abuse of position of trust".*
 5. *In September 2023 Insp. Vanderhoeven became your Neighbourhood Inspector and line-manager.*

96. The former Officer accepted paragraphs 1 to 5; these were not matters of contention within the proceedings, and accordingly these were found proven by the Panel.
97. *Paragraph 6 - In or around December 2023, during a team social event at Ten Pin Bowling CMK, you held hands with PCSO A, and as PCSO A was bending over the pool table, you stood behind her and bent over her.*
98. The Panel noted the former Officer stated that he assisted PCSO A with showing her how to hold the pool cue, but at no point did he bend over her or did he believe his actions were inappropriate. The Panel reviewed the evidence of PCSOs Mills, Hawksworth and Jones and preferred their evidence to that of the former Officer and therefore found this paragraph factually proven.
99. *Paragraph 7 - In January 2024, you became PCSO A's first line-manager.*
100. Based on the evidence of Inspector Vanderhoeven and the former Officer this paragraph was found factually proven. This was never in dispute.
101. *Paragraph 8 - After a team social event in January 2024, you, PCSO A, PCSO Mills and PCSO Hawksworth walked to a pub together. At the pub you and PCSO A kissed. This was witnessed by PCSO Mills. On the following day, or soon after, you and PCSO A discussed the fact that this had taken place.*
102. The Panel noted the evidence of the former Officer, who admitted that a kiss had taken place, though due to his state of intoxication he only became aware of this a couple of days later when PCSO A told him. The Panel also noted the evidence of PCSO A who confirmed the kiss had taken place and PCSO Mills who had witnessed the kiss. The panel found this paragraph was found factually proven.
103. *Paragraph 9 - From around January 2024 onwards your conduct towards PCSO A in the workplace and while on duty became inappropriate. You behaved flirtatiously and*

in an over-familiar manner with PCSO A, and treated PCSO A differently and / or preferentially, including in particular:

9.1 Physical touching of PCSO A.

9.2 Polishing PCSO A's boots while she was wearing them with her foot on your lap.

9.3 Calling PCSO A your "PA".

9.4 Asking PCSO A to get you food, buying and making each other food and eating shared meals together.

9.5 Spending time alone with PCSO A alone in the workplace kitchen and cuddling her there.

9.6 Making comments with innuendo directed at PCOS A.

9.7 Arranging crewing so that you and PCSO A crewed together.

9.8 Giving priority to PCSO A for use of police vehicles.

9.9 Collecting PCSO A in a marked police car when she was off duty and you were working.

104. In relation to each aspect of Paragraph 9 the Panel noted the following:

- The former Officer did not agree that he acted in a flirtatious way towards PCSO A. He stated that they did engage in what he described as banter and a friendship started to develop between them. He stated that PCSO A was aware that he had some personal challenges going on and she would check in with him to make sure he was OK.
- The former Officer stated he did not believe that he had been overly familiar with PCSO A or had given her preferential treatment.
- 9.1 *Physical touching of PCSO A.* – The Panel noted the former Officer admitted that he had massaged PCSO A's shoulders; however, this was conduct that he had engaged with a number of colleagues. Based on the evidence, the Panel found there was sufficient evidence to substantiate that the former Officer would routinely touch PCSO A in the workplace. This included giving her and other colleagues massages, consensually pushing her over as she bent over, lifting her up, and placing his hands around her waist.

- *9.2 Polishing PCSO A's boots while she was wearing them with her foot on your lap* – The panel noted that the former Officer admitted that he had polished PCSO A's boots, but denied that her foot had been in his lap. He also stated that he had assisted two other colleagues with their boots on that occasion. The Panel accepted that this was done when PCSO A placed her foot on his chair between his legs. Based on the evidence of PCSO's Jones, Barton and Kubiliute the Panel found this proven
- *9.3 Calling PCSO A your "PA"* – The Panel noted that the former Officer admitted that he had called PCSO A his PA and this was because she helped him to sort out his IT. The panel also noted the evidence of PCSO Jones and found this paragraph proven
- *9.4 Asking PCSO A to get you food, buying and making each other food and eating shared meals together* – The Panel noted the evidence of the former Officer who stated that he would eat with PCSO A and other team members, although 'it was never just themselves sitting down together. Based on the consistent evidence of the witnesses the Panel found this paragraph proven. Whilst the former Officer contended that he would routinely eat meals with other members of the team, the Panel was satisfied that there was evidence that the time he spent eating with PCSO A was routinely observed by the witnesses to be significantly and disproportionately more than that he spent with any other team member. The Panel also noted that even when the former Officer moved to the Blue Light Hub, PCSO Mills stated that PCSO A would want to go over to have lunch/dinner with the former Officer and eating at that location had only commenced when he moved there.
- *9.5 Spending time alone with PCSO A alone in the workplace kitchen and cuddling her there* - The Panel noted the evidence of the former Officer and that he admitted he had once hugged PCSO A in the kitchen when she was upset, but he had hugged many team members at different times if they needed consoling. Based on the evidence of PCSO Colborne, who witnessed the former officer and PCSO A cuddling in the kitchen and PCSO Baron who stated he would avoid the kitchen if the couple were in there as he did not wish to walk in on anything - the Panel found this paragraph proven.

- *9.6 Making comments with innuendo directed at PCSO A* - The Panel noted the former Officer denied he had engaged in making such comments, and PCSO A could not recall either incident. Based on the evidence of PCSO Mills who detailed the inappropriate comment relating to a stain on PCSO A's trousers and the evidence of PCSO Jones who detailed an inappropriate comment about PCSO A eating a wrap, the Panel was satisfied that the former Officer would make comments with innuendo directed towards PCSO A. Accordingly the Panel found this paragraph proven
- *9.7 Arranging crewing so that you and PCSO A crewed together* - The Panel noted the evidence of the former Officer, who denied he would routinely crew with PCSO A. He stated that at most he would crew with PCSO A two to three times a month. The Panel noted that there was a consensus across a number of witnesses, including PCSOs Barton and Jones, that the former Officer would disproportionately crew together with PCSO A, with two of the witnesses stating that he would crew with her up to two to three times in a weekly set of shifts. The Panel found this paragraph proven.
- *9.8 Giving priority to PCSO A for use of police vehicles* - The Panel noted the evidence of the former Officer, who denied he would give priority of vehicle allocation to PCSO A. The Panel noted that PCSO Wenn stated she had observed this, but it was not evidenced as a theme by other witnesses. Therefore, on balance, the panel did not find this paragraph to be proved.
- *9.9 Collecting PCSO A in a marked police car when she was off duty and you were working* - The Panel noted that the former Officer admitted that this had taken place as alleged and accepted that it was inappropriate, and he should have known better. The Panel accordingly found this paragraph was found proven.

105. *Paragraph 10 - This conduct reflected the fact that from around January 2024 onwards, you and PCSO A were in a relationship or developing relationship together*

106. The Panel concluded that based upon the consistent evidence of colleagues, from January 2024 onwards the former Officer and PCSO A were becoming increasingly

close within the workplace. The Panel concluded the cumulative proven conduct set out in paragraphs 6,8 and 9.1 – 9.9 (excluding 9.8), evidenced the formation and development of a relationship between them, and furthermore this went beyond a professional workplace friendship. Accordingly, this paragraph was found proven.

107. *Paragraph 11 - Other colleagues on your team observed your behaviour towards PCSO A, which made colleagues feel uncomfortable. Colleagues believed that you were in a relationship with PCSO A, and perceived that this was affecting the way you were behaving towards PCSO A and other colleagues within the South Neighbourhood Team. This impacted on the confidence of colleagues in you and had an adverse impact within your workplace.*

108. The Panel noted that the former Officer denied that his relationship with PCSO A had impacted upon the workplace. Building on its finding in relation to paragraphs 9.1 to 9.9 (excluding 9.8) and paragraph 10, the Panel concluded that this was at odds with the evidence of colleagues working on the former Officer's team. Inspector Vanderhoeven had spoken to a number of colleagues who had been on the team and she summarised that individuals had been really impacted and had disclosed they felt that PCSO A had been receiving preferential treatment. The Panel also noted that colleagues felt that they were being spoken about by the couple in what was described as 'pillow talk'. The Panel concluded therefore that the relationship of the former Officer and PCSO A had indeed made colleagues feel uncomfortable, it had impacted individuals' confidence, they had perceived favouritism towards PCSO A and overall, there was an adverse impact upon the workplace. In addition, the Panel noted that a couple of the witnesses had even described that the working environment was such that they had considered looking to change teams or potentially leave the police service.

109. *Paragraph 12 - You became aware of rumours within your team that you and PCSO A were in a relationship. In or around late spring or early summer of 2024 you spoke to members of your team and denied that you were in a relationship with PCSO A.*

110. Based on the evidence of both the former Officer and wider colleagues on the team, it was confirmed that the former Officer spoke to the team and stated he was not sleeping with PCSO A. Accordingly, the Panel found this paragraph proven.

111. *Paragraph 13. On or around 12 May 2024, you met with PCSO A in a pub, with some of your own friends. None of your other work colleagues (including PCSO Mills) were present.*

112. Based on the evidence of the former Officer, PCSO A and PC Mills, the Panel concluded this paragraph was proven.

113. *Paragraph 14. In July 2024, PC Barker became PCSO A's first line-manager, and you became PCSO A's second line manager.*

114. Based on the evidence of former Officer and Inspector Vanderhoeven this paragraph was found proven. This was never in dispute.

115. *Paragraph 15 - On 28 August 2024 you attended a meeting with Insp. Vanderhoeven and Ch/Insp. Hewitt during which you were asked about your relationship with PCSO A. You provided a dishonest and misleading account of your relationship with PCSO, and your conduct in doing so lacked integrity. In particular:*

15.1 You did not disclose the fact that you had kissed PCSO A in January 2024. This was information relevant to questions you were asked about your relationship with PCSO A.

15.2 You stated that you would sometimes go to the pub for a drink with PCSO A outside work, but that on all occasions when you did so, PCSO Mills was also present. This was untrue.

15.3 You stated that your relationship with PCSO A was nothing more than friendship and denied that you were in a relationship with PCSO A. This was untrue.

116. In relation to Paragraph 15 – It was not disputed that Inspector Vanderhoeven and Chief Inspector Hewitt met with the former Officer to discuss amongst other things concerns relating to his relationship with PCSO A. In relation to whether the former

Officer gave a dishonest and misleading account which lacked integrity, the Panel concluded the following in relation to each aspect of the allegations:

117. *15.1 You did not disclose the fact that you had kissed PCSO A in January 2024. This was information relevant to questions you were asked about your relationship with PCSO A*

118. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated that the former Officer outlined that his relationship with PCSO A was just a friendship. The Panel noted that the former Officer stated that he had not mentioned the kiss as he did not consider it to be a significant or meaningful event and he had not thought anything more about it. The Panel concluded that it was clearly relevant information that as a supervisor he had kissed PCSO A in January 2024 and he should have disclosed this to his Inspector so that she was aware this had occurred. Accordingly, in failing to disclose this information the Panel found that the former Officer's conduct was both misleading and lacking in integrity.

119. *15.2 You stated that you would sometimes go to the pub for a drink with PCSO A outside work, but that on all occasions when you did so, PCSO Mills was also present. This was untrue.*

120. Inspector Vanderhoeven stated that the former Officer told her that he sometimes went to the pub with PCSO A. However, on each occasion he had categorically stated that PCSO Mills had been present. The Panel noted that the former Officer stated that on the two occasions in November/December 2023 and January 2024, PCSO Mills had been present when they went to the pub, but not on 12th May 2024. The Panel noted that PCSO Mills stated categorically stated she did not go to the pub with them on the 12th May 2024. The Panel concluded that the former Officer had been dishonest when he told Inspector Vanderhoeven that PCSO Mills was always present when he went to the pub with PCSO A, and this was not a matter where there was room for confusion as he had openly introduced this into the conversation. The Panel further considered that the dishonesty was aggravated by the former Officer telling PCSO Mills that he had said this to make things look better – in that regard the panel found his actions also lacked integrity.

121. *15.3 You stated that your relationship with PCSO A was nothing more than friendship and denied that you were in a relationship with PCSO A. This was untrue.*

122. The panel concluded that the relationship between the former Officer and PCSO A had developed to be more than a professional working relationship between a supervisor and a junior member of staff. Colleagues who worked on the team provided a consistent account that further to December 2023, the relationship between the two of them had become increasingly close, such that colleagues, based upon what they were witnessing, were concluding that in all likelihood they were in a romantic relationship. The Panel noted that it had come to the attention of the former Officer that colleagues were concerned about the perceived nature of his relationship around Easter time in 2024. The Panel therefore concluded that the relationship between them had developed beyond accepted professional boundaries and the former Officer would have known this, and he had a duty to inform Inspector Vanderhoeven and Chief Inspector Hewitt that feelings between them had grown and that it was potentially impacting upon his supervisory responsibilities. Accordingly, the Panel concluded that the account he gave in the meeting on 28th August 2024 was one which lacked integrity.

123. *Paragraph 16 - During the meeting on 28 August 2024, you were advised about having boundaries and the team's perception. It was made clear to you that if you entered any relationship with a PCSO you line-managed you were required to disclose this to your line-manager.*

124. The former Officer confirmed that this conversation had taken place and that he had listened to and understood the advice which had been given to him by Inspector Vanderhoeven. The Panel therefore found this paragraph factually proven.

125. *Paragraph 17- As you were leaving the meeting, you informed Insp. Vanderhoeven that:*

17.1 When you and PCSO A met at the pub, your partner would drop you off, and her mother would drop her off - The Panel noted that the former Officer accepted he said this to Inspector Vanderhoeven and therefore found this paragraph factually proven.

17.2 You had thought about it recently, and had re-checked the E-learning package relating to “Abuse of position of trust” and you were confident you were doing nothing wrong. This is indicative of the fact that you were aware that your relationship with PCSO A had moved beyond the parameters of a friendship, and engaged the guidance on “Abuse of position of trust” - The Panel noted that the former Officer stated that he had rechecked the e-learning package and that he was confident that he was doing nothing wrong. The Panel noted he was unable to state when in the chronology of events this occurred. He stated his reason for doing this was because he was aware that colleagues were talking about his relationship with PCSO A and he wanted to assure himself that there was no problem with him having friends in the workplace. He stated there was no reference to senior and junior officers and he was content he was not abusing his position. The Panel found this element of the paragraph factually proven. In relation to the reason the former Officer did this, the Panel also accepted that the assertion that checking the guidance was indicative of his awareness that the relationship had the potential to engage the guidance and also found this element of the paragraph factually proven.

126. *Paragraph 18. Following the meeting on 28 August 2024 you informed PCSO Mills that you during that meeting you had stated that she had been present when you met with PCSO A outside work on or around 12 May 2024 (which was untrue), and that you had said this as it “looks better”.*

127. The Panel noted that the former Officer denied that this had taken place and that he had entered into such a conversation with PCSO Mills. PCSO Mills was categorical that this had taken place and the Panel could establish no reason as to why she would say it had happened if it had not. The Panel also noted that PCSO Mills had no other way of knowing what had been said at the meeting between the former Officer and Inspector Vanderhoeven. The Panel therefore found this paragraph factually proven.

128. *Paragraph 19 - From around September 2024 you were in an intimate relationship with PCSO A.*

129. The Panel noted that PCSO A stated that the relationship had become intimate by October 2024, and the former Officer also confirmed his recollection that this was the case by early October 2024. The Panel therefore found this paragraph proven.

130. *Paragraph 20 - Prior to PS Holmes joining the South Neighbourhood Team in October 2024, Insp. Vanderhoeven informed you that she intended to move PCSO A from your line management due to your friendship with her and the way this was perceived by the team. You were instructed by Insp. Vanderhoeven to move to the Blue Light Hub at West Ashland Fire Station when PS Holmes joined the team in October 2024.*
131. This was the evidence of Inspector Vanderhoeven, and the former Officer accepted this was the instruction he was given. The Panel found this paragraph to be proved.
132. *Paragraph 21 - From 14 October 2024, PS Holmes became PCSO A's second line-manager. PCSO A was based in the Broughton Police Office. You continued (contrary to instruction) to base yourself in the Broughton Police Office: you were the only sergeant based there.*
133. The Panel noted that the former Officer denied that he had failed to move from the Broughton Office when instructed. He stated that he agreed with Inspector Vanderhoeven, that he would stay at Broughton until he had finished some ongoing operations and until the appropriate IT equipment had arrived to facilitate his move to the Blue Light Hub. The Panel noted that Inspector Vanderhoeven stated that she asked him to move to the Blue Light Hub in October 2024, but he was reluctant to do so and she subsequently had to ask him to move again on 27th November 2024, as it was clear he had no intention of moving. Inspector Vanderhoeven outlined that the former Officer did eventually move to the Blue Light Hub, but she became aware that he was stating he was not happy to be posted there. The Panel concluded that so far as the accounts differed, they preferred the evidence of Inspector Vanderhoeven and this paragraph was factually proven.
134. *Paragraph 22 - In early October 2024, around the date of PCSO A's birthday, you took her to London and bought her "sexy underwear". You later informed PCSO Mills of this, showing her examples of lingerie adverts and explaining that you had been looking for what to buy PCSO A for her birthday and Christmas.*

135. The Panel noted the former Officer and PCSO A confirmed that they went to London and that he purchased underwear for her birthday. The former Officer stated that, despite buying sexy underwear for PCSO A, at that time they were still only friends, had not been intimate and he viewed it would be a 'nice gift' for her. The Panel noted that he denied he had shown lingerie adverts on his phone to PCSO Mills. The Panel concluded that it could find no reason as to why PCSO Mills would make this up and therefore all elements of this paragraph were proven.

136. *Paragraph 23 - On a date between 11 and 17 November 2024 during Operation Sceptre, you and PCSO A stated you were not hungry when other members of the team ate prior to scheduled patrols as a pack. When other members of the team went on patrol, you and PCSO A made arrangements to get dinner together. This resulted in PCSO Mills being crewed solo whilst you and PCSO A used another vehicle to go and get dinner. You and PCSO A did not join the patrol and spent the remainder of the evening in the office together.*

137. The Panel noted the former Officer stated that whilst he did end up having something to eat with PCSO A that evening, this occurred because it transpired both of them had not eaten and she needed to stay at the station to complete some intelligence reports. He stated that PCSO A stayed in the office after consuming the food as she needed further time to complete her administration. The Panel noted the evidence of PCSO Mills who stated that she had expected PCSO A to rejoin her after eating; however, the former Officer stated PCSO A would not be doing so and as a result PCSO Mills spent a period of time crewed, on her own. The Panel also noted the account of PC Barker expressed concern that PCSO Mills had been left single crewed on a knife crime operation and she was concerned this created a safety risk. PC Barker further stated that PCSO A not returning to the operation had created a level of discussion between colleagues on the team. The Panel found the paragraph factually proven.

138. *Paragraph 24 - On or around 27 November 2024 you had failed to move to the Blue Light Hub as you had been instructed by Insp. Vanderhoeven, and she instructed you again to move into the Blue Light Hub setting a deadline for you to do so.*

139. Inspector Vanderhoeven sent an email to this effect. The Panel found this paragraph factually proven.

140. *Paragraph 25 - In around late November, you spoke to PC Barker about your relationship with PCSO A. When she asked what your relationship with PCSO A was, you said you spent time together dating but did not have a label. When she asked if you were “seeing each other” you shrugged.*

141. The Panel noted that PC Barker outlined how shortly after the former Officer had been posted to the Blue Light Hub, he had asked to speak to her about her concerns about his relationship with PCSO A. She stated that the former Officer stated they enjoyed spending time together and would spend at least one rest day together. When asked if they were ‘seeing each other’ he told her they had not put a label on things and had not discussed what they were. She stated she asked him if the ‘bosses were aware’ and he responded ‘yeah, that is why I am here’ indicating that was why he had been moved to a different station. PC Barker said that she could not remember what the former Officer said exactly, but he indicated she could tell the team to stop them questioning his relationship with PCSO A. The Panel noted that the former Officer accepted speaking to PC Barker and he told her that he had gone for drinks and a meal with PCSO A, they enjoyed each other’s company, but they had not put a label on what their relationship was. He did not recollect shrugging his shoulders, when asked if he was seeing PCSO A. He stated he did not disclose that he had been intimate with her. Whilst the Panel could not determine if the former Officer had shrugged his shoulders as alleged, the Panel did find the rest of this paragraph proven.

142. *Paragraph 26 – At around this time and onwards, you referred to PCSO A as “baby” while in the workplace.*

143. The Panel noted that the former Officer admitted that he did refer to PCSO A as ‘baby’ in the workplace. The panel therefore found this paragraph proven.

144. *Paragraph 27 – By early December 2024, PCSO A had stayed at your address several times.*

145. The Panel noted that the former Officer confirmed that by early December 2024, PCSO A had stayed at his address several times and he also confirmed they had been intimate a number of times. The Panel therefore found this paragraph factually proven.

146. *Paragraph 28 – In December 2024, after you had been involved in a road traffic accident, PCSO A attended the scene while on duty, and you and she hugged at the side of the road. When you returned to the Broughton Office with PCSO A and other officers, you and PCSO A kissed each other in the office.*

147. The Panel noted that the former Officer accepted that he had been involved in a road traffic collision whilst on duty. However, he stated that it actually occurred in October 2024. The difference in dates was raised by the Chair during the hearing and it was confirmed by the former Officer's Counsel that the date was not considered to be a material part of this allegation. It has been considered in this context. The former Officer confirmed that they had hugged at the side of the road, as PCSO A was aware he had a lot going on in his personal life and that he liked his car. The former Officer confirmed there was no policing purpose for PCSO A and PCSO Mills to attend the incident. He denied that he and PCSO A had kissed when they returned to the police station. The Panel noted that PCSO Mills stated after the road traffic collision had occurred, she returned to Broughton Police Station, and she heard PCSO A and the former Officer kissing. She stated she stood by the door where she could hear the kissing and asked them if they 'were done yet' and the former Officer and PCSO A came out laughing and he said, 'Yeah we're done now'. The Panel noted that whilst PCSO Mills had not actually seen them kissing, she was clear on what she had heard, and this associated with the words of the former Officer and the demeanour of them when they returned, when placed in the context of what had just happened, persuaded the panel that PCSO Mills was correct in her assessment of the situation. The Panel therefore found the whole of the paragraph factually proven.

148. *Paragraph 29 - On or around 30 December 2024, Insp. Vanderhoeven met with you to discuss your relationship with PCSO A. During that meeting:*

29.1 Insp. Vanderhoeven provided you with a copy of National Police Chiefs' Council Guidance about appropriate relationships in the workplace, and discussed this with you.

149. The Panel noted that the former Officer accepted that he had met with Inspector Vanderhoeven as stated and that she had provided him with a copy of the NPCC guidance on appropriate relationships in the workplace. He stated that he was not

aware of this guidance prior to December 2024. He stated that that he read the guidance afterwards and understood it was preferred that a supervisory officer report a relationship, but he was not obliged to do so. He stated that, having read the guidance, he believed it was relevant to his relationship with PCSO A only from the point they became intimate in October 2024. The Panel found this paragraph factually proven.

29.2 You were asked by Insp. Vanderhoeven about your relationship with PCSO A. In response, you did not directly confirm that you were in a relationship with PCSO A, and made comments about having “no label”, stating “we like spending time together”.

150. The Panel noted that the former Officer accepted that when asked about the relationship between himself and PCSO A he said that it did not have ‘a label’. The Panel concluded this paragraph was factually proven.

29.3 You did not state that you were in an intimate relationship until you were asked a direct question by Insp. Vanderhoeven, and answered “yes”. You then stated that this was no-one else’s business.

151. The Panel noted that the former Officer accepted he did not pro-actively volunteer information and report the relationship himself, even when it was apparent that this was necessary. The Panel concluded this paragraph was factually proven.

152. *Paragraph 30 - From around December 2023 / January 2024 onwards, your conduct towards and relationship with PCSO A was inappropriate and created a conflict of interest. Your conduct towards and relationship with PCSO A also impacted negatively on other colleagues and the wider South Neighbourhood Team. This was exacerbated by your role as a senior and supervising officer for members of the team, including PCSO A.*

153. The Panel concluded that based upon the consistent evidence of colleagues, from January 2024 onwards the former Officer and PCSO A were becoming increasingly close within the workplace. The cumulative proven conduct set out in paragraphs 6,8 and 9.1 – 9.9 (excluding 9.8) of the Regulation 30 Notice, evidenced the formation and

development of a relationship which was inappropriate and created a conflict of interest. The Panel therefore found this element of the paragraph was factually proven.

154. In relation to the impact on the team, the Panel noted that the former Officer denied that his relationship with PCSO A had impacted upon the workplace. Building on its finding in relation to paragraphs 9.1 to 9.9 (excluding 9.8) and paragraph 10, the Panel concluded that this was at odds with the evidence of colleagues working on the team. The Panel noted that Inspector Vanderhoeven had spoken to a number of team colleagues and she summarised that individuals had been really impacted and had disclosed they felt that PCSO A had been receiving preferential treatment. The Panel also noted that colleagues felt that they were being spoken about by the couple in what was described as pillow talk. The Panel concluded therefore the relationship of the former Officer and PCSO A had made colleagues feel uncomfortable, it had impacted individuals' confidence, they had perceived favouritism towards PCSO A and overall, there was an adverse impact upon the workplace. In addition, the Panel noted that a couple of the witnesses had described that the working environment was such that they had considered looking to change teams or potentially leave the police service. The panel therefore concluded that the conduct of the former Officer did significantly impact on the team and this was exacerbated by the fact he was the team supervisor and should have been acting as a role model.

155. *Paragraph -31. You should have, but did not, disclose to a more senior officer any of the following, either immediately or within a reasonable period of time:*

31.1 That you and PCSO A had kissed in January 2024.

156. The Panel noted that the fact of the kiss and the former Officer's knowledge of it were not in dispute. It was not disclosed at any time. The former Officer stated he had not mentioned the kiss as he did not consider it to be a significant or meaningful event, and he had not thought anything more about it. The Panel concluded that the kiss was clearly relevant information that he should have disclosed to his Inspector so that she was aware this had occurred, but he did not. Accordingly, in failing to disclose this information the Panel found that the former Officer's actions were both misleading and lacking in integrity.

31.2 That from around December 2023 / January 2025 you were in or were beginning to develop a relationship with, PCSO A.

157. The Panel concluded that the relationship between the former Officer and PCSO A had developed to be more than a professional working relationship between a supervisor and a junior member of staff. Colleagues who worked on the team provided a consistent account that further to December 2023, the relationship between the two of them had become increasingly close, such that colleagues, based upon what they were witnessing, were concluding that in all likelihood they were in a romantic relationship. This relationship was not disclosed to a more senior officer immediately or within a reasonable period of time. This paragraph was proved.

Paragraph 31.3 That from around September 2024 you were in an intimate relationship with PCSO A.

158. Both the former Officer and PCSO A confirmed that there was an intimate relationship commenced between them by early October 2024. On the basis that the parameters of the date specified cover September to October 2024, the Panel found this proved. The relationship was still not disclosed to a more senior officer, either immediately or within a reasonable period of time. The panel contextually noted that the former Officer stated that he had completed the Thames Valley Police Guidance – Abuse of Position for Sexual or Emotional Gain and Professional Boundaries (January 2020) e-learning package in January 2023 and had reviewed the content of this again, sometime before August 2024, when colleagues had raised concerns with him. The Panel concluded that Section 4.1 and 4.2 of this guidance, clearly sets out the potential impact of relationships which involve a supervisor and a junior staff member, how this can impact upon the perception of colleagues and the requirement for colleagues to consider reporting such relationships to PSD. The Panel therefore concluded the former Officer was aware he should consider reporting such a relationship, but he still failed to do so.

159. *Paragraph 32 - You were, or should have been aware that you were required to make such disclosures, as a senior and supervising officer, and in particular:*

32.1 Due to the obvious risk of a conflict of interest, particularly when you were PCSO A's line-manager.

160. The Panel noted that in the meeting with Inspector Vanderhoeven on 24th August 2024, she had shared the CoP/NPCC Guidance – Appropriate Personal Relationships and Behaviour in the Workplace (2019) with the former Officer. He confirmed that he had subsequently read this. In addition, Inspector Vanderhoeven stated that she informed him that if he entered into a relationship with a PCSO then he must report immediately report it. The Panel noted that the former Officer stated the Inspector had not said this to him, however the Panel preferred her account and concluded that she did communicate this to him. Although the former Officer ceased to be PCSO's first line manager in the later part of the year, he still had some responsibility for her and the ability to set her tasks. Therefore, set against the context of the August meeting, the direction given to disclose any relationship and the provision of the CoP and NPCC guidance, it should have been clear and obvious to him that he had a duty to disclose the further development of his relationship to Inspector Vanderhoeven. The Panel therefore concluded the former Officer was aware he should consider reporting such a relationship because of the conflict of interest – a tipping point had clearly been reached and passed - but he failed to do so. Accordingly, the panel found this paragraph proven.

32.2 Having received Reflective Practice on 24 March 2022 regarding your conduct towards female colleagues.

161. The Panel reviewed the reflective practice which the former Officer had received and considered the context was different and accordingly did not find this would have informed his decision concerning reporting his relationship with PCSO A. Accordingly, the panel found this paragraph was not proven.

32.3 Having completed training in 2023 on Abuse of position of trust.

162. The Panel concluded for the reasons already stated that the former Officer had completed this training and also had subsequently reviewed its content. Therefore, the section of the training on personal relationships should have informed his decision

making on reporting the development of the relationship with PCSO A. Accordingly, the Panel found this paragraph was proven.

32.4 From 28 August 2024 onwards, having been directly asked about your relationship with PCSO A, been given advice about boundaries and the team's perception and having been expressly told that if you entered any relationship with a PCSO you line managed you were required to disclose this to your line manager

163. The Panel concluded for the reasons already stated, the meeting with Inspector Vanderhoeven on 28th August 2024 clearly set out the expectations to the former Officer concerning reporting any future relationship with a PCSO to her. Despite this the former Officer failed to make the required disclosure about the relationship until he was directly challenged about it in December 2024. Accordingly, the Panel found this paragraph was proven.

164. *Paragraph 33. During this period, you did not only fail to make such a disclosure, but dishonestly denied the nature of your relationship with PCSO A and sought to mislead others about this, including your own line manager.*

165. The Panel concluded during the period of December 2023 to January 2025 there was a developing and increasingly close relationship between the former Officer and PCSO A. This moved from a friendship to a relationship which was professionally inappropriate and led to colleagues challenging him around Easter 2024. At this point the officer denied that they were sleeping together and said they were just good friends. Further to being challenged colleagues continued to note behaviour between the two of them which led them to conclude the couple were romantically involved. This culminated in Inspector Vanderhoeven becoming aware of rumours about the relationship and speaking to the former officer in August 2024.

166. The Panel concluded at this meeting the former officer downplayed how the relationship had developed between him and PCSO A. Contextually, the Panel observed that within five weeks of that meeting, where the former Officer stated they were just friends, he had:

- met with PCSO A for drinks and food in September
- brought her lingerie during a trip to London on 7th October 2024
- entered into an intimate relationship with her by 9th October 2024

167. Accordingly, the Panel concluded that in his interactions with Inspector Vanderhoeven in August and at the start of the meeting in December 2024, his accounts had not fully disclosed the extent of the relationship at different points and therefore they were misleading and lacking in integrity. The Panel however stopped short of finding that this element of his conduct was dishonest.

168. In relation to his interactions with his colleagues, the Panel was unable to conclude whether the former Officer had been dishonest or misled his colleagues in the period from January 2024 to August 2024. The Panel concluded however that after he had moved to the Blue Light Hub in late October 2024, his interaction with PCSO Wenn when he stated the ‘boss thinks I am having inappropriate relationships, why can’t I just have friends?’ was by definition misleading and lacking in integrity.

169. The panel further concluded that when he initiated a conversation with PC Barker in November 2024, his account of the relationship lacked integrity and was misleading, set against the context that the couple were by this point definitely in an intimate relationship.

170. In relation to the various accounts that the former Officer gave to colleagues, from September to November 2024, though he was economical with the truth, the Panel stopped short of finding these were dishonest.

L. Breaches of the Standards of Professional Behaviour

171. Having made its findings of fact, the Panel considered each of the four Standards of Professional Behaviour that were alleged to have been breached:

Honesty and Integrity

172. The Panel found this Standard was breached with regard to dishonesty in respect of the former Officer proactively stating to Inspector Vanderhoeven on all occasions PCSO Mills had been present when he went to the pub with PCSO A. It was not in

dispute that PCSO Mills was not present at the pub on 12th May, as the text message sent by the former officer confirmed. This deliberate dishonesty was further aggravated by his subsequent comment to PCSO Mills, where he stated he had told Inspector Vanderhoeven that she was present because “it looks better”. This placed PCSO Mills in an invidious position.

173. The Panel also found this Standard was breached with regards to integrity as per the finding that the former Officer failed to be candid about the development of the relationship when asked by Insp Vanderhoeven and other colleagues.

Authority, Respect and Courtesy

174. The Panel found this Standard was engaged from around Easter 2024 as the former Officer was aware that his developing relationship with PCSO A was causing concern with colleagues on his team. From this point onwards he had a duty to recognise the impact of his conduct on the team, including PCSO A, and was duty bound to inform his Inspector so that she could decide the appropriate management response to the prevailing situation.

175. The Panel concluded that the cumulative actions of the former Officer in the workplace were inappropriate and created a working environment which negatively impacted on the colleagues whom he had a duty to lead and for whom he was supposed to be a role model.

176. The Panel considered that although it was clear that colleagues perceived there to be preferential treatment given to PCSO A, the actual evidence on this was ambiguous and the Panel did not find this element proven on the balance of probabilities.

Duties and Responsibilities

177. The Panel found this Standard was engaged from Easter 2024 onwards when the former Officer was duty bound to make Insp Vanderhoeven aware of the developing relationship and the impact of the speculation on his colleagues. The Panel noted that he had completed the Abuse of Position training and specifically the section relating to personal relationships and he further stated he revisited this guidance when concerns were raised with him. As a supervisor of almost ten years standing, it should have been clear and obvious to him that he needed to raise this.

178. The Panel further found this Standard was breached after his meeting with Inspector Vanderhoeven in August 2024, when he was given clear directions that he must report any relationship that he entered into with a PCSO. He was also given the College of Policing and NPCC guidance on such relationships. Within five weeks of this meeting the relationship had become intimate. Further to this significant development in the relationship, the former Officer failed to report it until he was directly challenged about it in December 2024 by Inspector Vanderhoeven.

Discreditable Conduct

179. The Panel concluded this Standard was also breached. The former Officer's actions in continuing to act in a supervisory role in relation to PCSO A, while in a relationship or developing relationship with her, behaving inappropriately towards her, failing to make prompt disclosure of the relationship to a more senior officer, and providing a misleading account of the relationship with PCSO A to Insp Vanderhoeven and others, which lacked integrity – all brought discredit upon the police service.

180. The Panel further concluded that if the public were aware:

- a supervisor was engaging in inappropriate behaviour with a junior colleague whilst on duty
- was as a result causing a negative impact upon the team
- a supervisor had failed to appropriately report the status of the relationship notwithstanding the conflict it created
- had given his colleagues and line manager accounts which lacked integrity

They would be rightly concerned, and the proven conduct would undermine public confidence and bring discredit upon the police service.

M. Panel finding on seriousness – Gross Misconduct, Misconduct or neither

181. The Panel went on to consider under Regulation 41(15) (b) of the 2020 Conduct Regulations whether the conduct as found amounted to misconduct, gross misconduct or neither.

182. The Panel reminded itself, that under Regulation 2(1) ‘Misconduct’ means a breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour that is so serious as to justify disciplinary action, whilst ‘Gross Misconduct’ means a breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour that is so serious as to justify dismissal.

183. In reaching an assessment on the seriousness of the proven conduct the Panel has considered the College of Policing Guidance on Outcomes (2023) which states consideration should be given to an officer’s culpability, any harm caused, and the existence of any aggravating factors or mitigating factors.

184. This approach taken was that identified by Mr Popplewell J in *Fuglers LLP v SRA* [2014] EWHC 179 (Admin) which is in these terms: *“In assessing seriousness, the most important factors will be (1) the culpability for misconduct in question and (2) the harm caused by the misconduct.....(3) aggravating factorsand mitigating factors.....”*

Culpability

185. The Panel reminded itself that culpability denotes an officer’s blameworthiness or responsibility for their actions and found the following to be relevant to the assessment of culpability.

186. The conduct of the former Officer was intentional and deliberate. (4.10) in relation to:

- a. A cumulative course of conduct over the period of a year, where the interaction with PCSO A was inappropriate
- b. Failure to disclose the developing relationship:
 - i. After the kiss
 - ii. After becoming aware of colleagues concerns around Easter 2024
 - iii. When challenged by Inspector Vanderhoeven in August 2024
 - iv. From the period after August 2024, to late December 2024
- c. The integrity of disclosures that were made to colleagues and Inspector Vanderhoeven.

- d. The dishonesty concerning the presence of PCSO Mills at the pub in May 2024.

- 187. The Panel concluded that deliberately misleading colleagues and Inspector Vanderhoeven concerning the nature of the relationship increased the culpability of the former Officer (4.28)
- 188. The deliberate volunteering of incorrect information about the presence of PCSO Mills at the pub to a line manager increased the culpability of the former Officer (4.26)
- 189. In relation to the former Officer's rank and abuse of his position the Panel concluded these were best dealt with as aggravating factors.
- 190. The Panel concluded that overall the level of culpability was HIGH.

Harm

- 191. The Panel noted that although the former Officer denied that his relationship with PCSO A had impacted upon the workplace this was at odds with the evidence of colleagues working on his team. Also, Inspector Vanderhoeven had spoken to a number of colleagues who had been on the team and she witnessed how individuals had been really impacted and disclosed that they perceived that PCSO A had been receiving preferential treatment.
- 192. The Panel also noted that colleagues felt that they were being spoken about by the couple in what was described as pillow talk.
- 193. The Panel concluded therefore the relationship of the former Officer and PCSO A had made colleagues feel uncomfortable, it had impacted individuals' confidence, they had perceived favouritism towards PCSO A and overall, there was a significant adverse impact upon the workplace.

194. The Panel concluded that colleagues had started to doubt their own judgement, as what they were witnessing was at odds with what they were being told by the former Officer and PCSO A.

195. In addition, the Panel noted that a couple of the witnesses had described that the working environment was such that they had considered looking to change teams or potentially leave the police service.

196. The Panel also concluded the former Officer's failure to appropriately disclose the relationship in a timely manner, created an environment where PCSO A felt that she was subject of ongoing discussion by team members, who were questioning the status of her relationship with the Sergeant on the team. This led to her becoming withdrawn from the team and there was evidence of the situation creating conflict with other team members.

197. The Panel also concluded that the sustained impact of the former Officer's conduct on the morale and culture on the team and the associated discussion that this created amongst colleagues, was likely to have impacted upon the operational effectiveness of the team and the policing service that it provided to the public.

198. The Panel concluded that the proven allegations, if known by the public, would have an obvious and impact on trust and confidence in the police service (4.66).

199. The Panel found the overall level of harm to be HIGH

Aggravating factors

200. In considering aggravating factors the Panel were careful not to double count and found the factors below to be relevant:

201. As the Sergeant on the team the former Officer had a responsibility to create a positive culture that ensured all colleagues perceived they were being treated equally. Over a sustained period, he had failed to do this or act as a role model.

202. From around Easter 2024 the former Officer became aware that there were real concerns relating to the status of his relationship with PCSO A. At this point he should

have made Inspector Vanderhoeven aware of these concerns. Instead, he decided to dismiss the concerns of colleagues and continued to develop his relationship with PCSO A, such that it impacted upon the culture and atmosphere on the team. To this end, even if he had not realised himself prior to the intervention from his colleagues that his developing relationship was causing concerns, from that point he was aware his conduct was being viewed as improper.

203. The proven cumulative inappropriate conduct of the former Officer in predominantly the workplace setting evidenced a pattern of regular, repeated and sustained behaviour over time. To this end the Panel noted that some of the witnesses commented that the behaviour had become routine and normalised.

204. On his own evidence, the former Officer had completed the Abuse of Position training and then had revisited it and should have recognised that his conduct was engaging the professional boundaries section of this guidance and he was under a duty to report the relationship so it could be appropriately managed within the workplace.

205. The Panel did not consider the relationship itself was an abuse of trust, position, powers or authority. However, his position as the Sergeant of the team enabled him to influence the narrative, to both those he managed and his line manager which perpetuated some of the harm above.

206. At the point when Inspector Vanderhoeven spoke to the former Officer in August 2024, his failure to openly disclose the full context of the relationship, from the incidence of the kiss onwards, significantly lacked integrity. Accordingly, Inspector Vanderhoeven did not have the full information about the history of the evolving relationship such that she could decide on how best to manage the workplace risks.

207. Further to the meeting with Inspector Vanderhoeven, the former Officer was additionally given the NPCC guidance on appropriate relationships and left in no doubt that he must disclose such relationships. Within five weeks his relationship had further developed, and he was buying PCSO A lingerie and they had become intimate. Set against these significant developments, the former Officer further failed to disclose the relationship and only did so in late December 2024 when he was directly challenged and asked by Inspector Vanderhoeven.

208. In relation to the proven dishonesty concerning the stated presence of PCSO Mills at the pub in May 2024, the Panel found it a particularly aggravating factor that the

former Officer went on to tell her that he had told the Inspector she was present. This action was significantly lacking in integrity and made PCSO Mills concerned that she would get into trouble.

209. The Panel found it deeply concerning that having read the Abuse of Position guidance and the NPCC guidance on appropriate relationships in the workplace, the former Officer as a police officer and Sergeant adopted a position where he considered his relationship with PCSO A was not the business of anyone else. This showed a fundamental failure to reflect on and appreciate his position as a supervisor and understand the perceived risk of his conduct.

210. The Panel noted there were multiple proven allegations and breaches of the Standards of Professional Behaviour.

Mitigating factors

211. The Panel considered carefully all the factors that are detailed in paragraph 4.79 of the Guidance. The Panel was careful to remind itself of the difference between mitigating factors and personal mitigation. Mitigating factors are those that could potentially indicate a lower level of culpability.

212. The Panel found mitigating factors were largely lacking in this case and were confined to the former Officer genuinely appearing to believe the relationship was his private business.

Panel Finding on seriousness and misconduct/gross misconduct

213. Having listened to closing submissions and considered whether the mitigating factor reduces the seriousness of the misconduct, the Panel considered that overall, the conduct of the former Officer was such that the seriousness assessment was HIGH.

214. The Panel concluded that the proven allegations amounted cumulatively to a course of conduct over the period December 2023 to December 2024. The proven conduct was so serious as to amount to **Gross Misconduct**.

N. Approach to Outcome

215. The approach taken by the Panel when considering sanction was that identified by Mr Popplewell J in *Fuglers LLP v SRA* [2014] EWHC 179 (Admin) which is in these terms:

“There are three stages to the approach which should be adopted (by a solicitor’s disciplinary tribunal) in determining sanction. The first stage is to assess the seriousness of the misconduct. The second stage is to keep in mind the purpose for which sanctions are imposed by such a tribunal. The third stage is to choose the sanction which most appropriately fulfils that purpose for the seriousness of the conduct in question.”

216. In reaching its decision regarding the disciplinary outcome, the Panel gave due consideration to all the evidence and information put before them. This included the following:

- The officer’s record of service
- The officer’s training record
- Six character references
- Submissions made on behalf of the Appropriate Authority concerning outcome and sanction
- Submissions made on behalf of the former Officer concerning mitigation, outcome and sanction
- The nature of the allegations and findings
- The interests of the public
- The interests of Thames Valley Police.

217. In coming to its conclusion as to the appropriate outcome, the Panel had regard to the College of Policing Guidance, the HOG and relevant legal authorities

Seriousness

218. The panel was assisted by the Guidance, which emphasises that there are 4 elements that the panel are required to consider when assessing seriousness, namely - culpability, harm, aggravating and mitigating factors.
219. The Panel reassessed the seriousness assessment that it had completed following the same process at the **‘First Stage Findings’** stage.
220. The Panel noted the submissions by Counsel for the former Officer concerning the absence of the following factors in the proven misconduct:
- a. The Panel did not find the relationship between the former officer and PCSO A amounted to an abuse of trust, powers or authority
 - b. The Panel did not find that there was evidence that the former officer had given preferential treatment to PCSO A
 - c. The case was not one where it involved a victim, witness or vulnerable person
 - d. The case was not one where it featured corruption, financial gain or misuse of police systems
 - e. The case was not one where there were findings of operational dishonesty.
- In relation to this representation the Panel reviewed its findings and agreed that whilst dishonest and the conduct had taken place at work, it did not have the features which put it into the category of ‘operational dishonesty’.
221. Having considered these representations and revisited the four-stage assessment process, the Panel found that their assessment of seriousness remained high.

O. Personal Mitigation

222. The 2020 Home Office Guidance says that the purpose of misconduct proceedings is to be “fair to the individual who is subject to the process, as well as all parties involved” in order to arrive “at a correct assessment of the matter in question and [provide] public and policing confidence in the system.” The Panel therefore considered carefully the scope for personal mitigation in this case.
223. The Panel considered this only after forming an assessment of the seriousness of the misconduct, as recommended by paragraph 6.2 of the Guidance on Outcomes. The

Guidance reminded the Panel that personal mitigation is always relevant and should always be taken into account.

224. The Panel then went on to consider personal mitigation and reviewed the service record and character references that had been provided:

- The panel reviewed the two PDRs of the former Officer and noted that he was assessed by his supervisors to be:
- A supportive officer to his colleagues and one that considered their welfare
- Active and effective in his search advisor role
- Operationally proactive, with positive feedback concerning his role in Operation Sceptre
- He had received a Chief Constables commendation for his work on Operation DINA

225. The Panel reviewed the six-character references submitted by colleagues and friends of the former Officer and noted common themes concerning:

- They had not had reason to question his integrity, dishonesty or professionalism
- They held him in high regard and considered him to be a diligent and approachable officer
- He had provided advice and supported colleagues to enter the police service
- He had responded effectively in tragic critical incident scenarios

226. The Panel reminded itself that due to the nature and purpose of disciplinary proceedings, the weight attributed to this material was necessarily limited, particularly having found serious misconduct. (the Guidance para 6 and *Salter v Chief Constable of Dorset* [2012] EWCA Civ 1047 Para 23).

P. Purpose of Misconduct Proceedings

227. Having assessed seriousness, the second stage of the structured approach required the Panel to remind themselves of the purpose for which sanctions are imposed.

228. The three-fold purpose of sanctions is explained in the Guidance at (2.3):

- Maintaining public confidence in and the reputation of the police service
- Upholding high standards in policing and deterring misconduct
- Protecting the public

229. The Panel considered the first two of these purposes to be particularly relevant to its findings and considerations on sanction and the facts of this case.

230. The Panel also took account of the comments of Lord Carswell in the decision of the House of Lords in *R (Green) v Police Complaints Authority* [2004] UKHL 6 at paragraph 78:

“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.”

Q. Availability of outcome sanctions upon a Panel finding of Gross Misconduct.

231. The Panel, having reminded itself of the purpose of misconduct proceedings, was required to determine the sanction that most appropriately met the purpose of the regime.

232. The Panel reminded itself of the Guidance at paragraph 2.7 that misconduct proceedings are not designed to punish officers.

233. Equally the panel reminded itself of paragraph 2.8 of the Guidance, which states:

“However, the outcome imposed can have a punitive effect, which should therefore be no more than is necessary to satisfy the purpose of the proceedings. Consider less severe outcomes before more severe outcomes”

234. As this was a case concerning a former officer, the Panel reviewed paragraph 3.31 of the College of Policing Guidance on Outcomes in Police Misconduct Proceedings which deals with former officers. The Panel noted that where a Panel has concluded that conduct amounts to Gross Misconduct, it can only consider two outcomes: disciplinary action or no disciplinary action. Where the finding is Gross Misconduct and disciplinary action is imposed, this can only be that the former officer would have been dismissed if still serving. No other sanction can be enforced. If the finding is Gross Misconduct but the Panel determines that dismissal is not justified, then no action will be taken, and the Gross Misconduct will simply be recorded.

235. To establish what the sanction would be if the former Officer was still serving, the panel referred themselves to the Guidance, at paragraph 2.8 and considered the following in ascending order.

- (i) A final written warning
- (ii) Reduction in rank
- (iii) Dismissal without notice.

236. The panel noted the submissions of the Appropriate Authority and Counsel for the former Officer concerning outcome. The Appropriate Authority submitted that if still serving the appropriate sanction would have been dismissal without notice, whilst Counsel for the former Officer submitted that a sanction of a Final Written Warning or reduction in rank might have been appropriate.

Written warning

237. The Panel considered very carefully whether a Final Written Warning would be an appropriate sanction in the case. The Panel concluded that based upon the collective seriousness of the proven conduct the imposition of a final written warning in this case would not fulfil the purpose of police misconduct proceedings.

Reduction in rank

238. The Panel then went on to consider whether reduction in rank would be appropriate in the circumstances. The Panel carefully considered the relevant sections of the Home Officer Guidance and specifically sections 11.133 through to 11.143. In

consideration of whether this would be appropriate in these circumstances had the former Officer still been serving, the Panel sought the view of the Appropriate Authority, which confirmed in open session that such a sanction would not have been viable for the organisation.

239. The Panel considered the seriousness of the proven conduct and the factors set out in 11.136 of the HOG:

- a. The Panel in line with its findings of fact and seriousness assessment, concluded that an element of its findings did evidence a poor leadership example and had brought the rank of Sergeant into disrepute. The Panel then considered if this was limited in extent and concluded the fact that the former Officer had entered into a course of conduct over a year period meant that it was not.
- b. The Panel then considered the nature of the number of aggravating factors that it had found. The former Officer had a number of opportunities to reflect on his conduct having been made aware of its impact by his own team and also when asked about it in his meeting in August 2024 with his Inspector. Despite this he failed to suitably reflect and appropriately report the nature of his relationship with PCSO A.
- c. The Panel also noted the former Officer had shown little insight into his actions and had maintained that what he did in his private life was not the business of anyone else.
- d. Finally, the Panel recognised that the findings in relation to dishonesty and integrity were significant aggravating factors

240. The Panel therefore concluded that reduction in rank would not be a suitable sanction in this case and would not fulfil the purpose of the police misconduct regime.

241. The Panel considered that the threefold purpose of the misconduct regime could only be satisfied, by the imposition of a sanction that if the former Officer was still serving, he would be dismissed without notice from Thames Valley Police.

R. Summary on outcome

242. The Panel having considered all the issues, including the three principles highlighted and the serious nature of the misconduct, imposed the only disciplinary action available for a former Officer, namely a declaration that if he had still been serving, he would have been dismissed from the police service without notice.

243. The Panel considered the sanction as the only proportionate means of achieving the legitimate purpose of the proceedings.

S. Ancillary matters

244. There were no representations concerning the publication of a public notice, although it should be noted that the direction concerning PCSO A's anonymity continues.

245. No representations will be made to the College of Policing, so the former Officer's details will go on the publically accessible part of the barred list in the usual way.

Chair of Panel

DCC Paul Mills QPM (Retired)

Date 11/06/2026