

Agenda Item No 13 – Complaint re Criminal Damage at Jubilee Field, Police Response Briefing Report

“A Constable is a citizen locally appointed but having authority under the crown, for the protection of life and property, the prevention and detection of crime and the prosecution of offenders against the peace, without fear or favour.”

This was a definition I had to learn when I joined the Devon Constabulary some 65+ years ago and I still remember it. You were always a Constable, regardless of the rank you achieved, as rank in the police service was purely for administrative purposes.

I do not know what definition is used today but the term ‘Constable’ appears to be a lost for the generalisation over the term police officer and I am not sure as to what their priorities are.

In my day such a complaint would have been referred to the Divisional Commander who may have dealt with it herself/himself or at least referred it to the local Sub Divisional Commander to deal with. Contact would have been made with the complainant by an officer at that level with a view to either informally resolving it by way of discussion or, if the circumstances warranted it, a disciplinary investigation against an officer for neglect of duty.

I have set out this preamble purely in order that councillors may make a judgement as to what prompts my following comment/suggestion as to what action may, or may not, be taken as a follow up to the response that has been received to our complaint.

The Parish Council made a complaint to the Chief Constable, copied to the Police and Crime Commissioner, concerning the lack of police investigation into complaints of criminal damage within the village. The complaint was deflected by the Police and Crime Commissioner and forwarded to the Professional Standards Department of the police. The Professional Standards Department did acknowledge receipt of the letters but we are not sure as to whether or not that came from the letter to the Chief Constable or the referral from the Police and Crime Commissioner.

A follow-up inquiry from our Clerk resulted in advice that the complaint had not even been allocated for attention.

There were press articles as to the parish council making a complaint and although a police inspector responded to an inquiry from the press no contact was made with the parish council by any police officer.

The letter from the police appears to have been decided upon and responded to by a civilian Case Handler without any enquiry or contact with the complainant. They have decided to deal with it in this way regardless of our views by saying – “*This means that it was considered suitable to be resolved without investigative steps having to be carried out.*” In other words they have not even bothered to look into our complaint at all.

They say that – “*Without evidence of the offenders there is nothing that can be done to pursue the offenders.*” In some cases there are pictures but they have not even been shared with local officers and so they have not even had the opportunity to see if they could recognise the offender. Alternatively a simple enquiry of children playing in the park would no doubt have identified the offender and a simple interview would have probably brought to light evidence for other incidents. That is what would have happened in my day.

The letter says – “*Due to the capacity of local officers, it is not always possible for the crimes to be investigated by themselves.*”

The final paragraph is rather laughable – “*I apologise on behalf of Devon and Cornwall Police that you felt the need to raise concerns about the service provided and I hope that the above provides you with a satisfactory resolution to your complaint.*”

They did nothing at the start other than issue a crime number and in my view they have done nothing since.

We have now received an invite to meet local officers at a ‘Public Relations’ event but that will do nothing as it is the management and the whole system that is wrong.

Future action which can be considered.

- a) Do nothing and accept the reply;
- b) Write a letter of complaint to His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services; [Devon and Cornwall have been subjected to criticism of the way they deal with complaints.]
- c) Write a letter to our Member of Parliament setting out all the circumstances and asking her to take it up with the appropriate Minister;
- d) Do b) and c).

Barry G J Warren
29th January 2026