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26 March 2015

Rt Hon Theresa May MP  
Home Secretary

Dear Home Secretary,

### **Handling of complaints relating to the conduct of Police and Crime Commissioners**

The Norfolk Police and Crime Panel (“the Panel”) recently met to consider the arrangements in place for reimbursing expenses incurred by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk, Stephen Bett, in carrying out his duties. This extraordinary meeting was prompted by the publication, in February 2015, of the IPCC’s managed investigation final report about the expenses claimed by Mr Bett.

As I’m sure you are aware, the managed investigation into the expenses claimed by Mr Stephen Bett was triggered following receipt of a complaint alleging that he had attempted to defraud the public purse. The IPCC Commissioner overseeing the managed investigation reviewed the findings and decided that a referral to the Crown Prosecution Service should not be made as there was no evidence Mr Bett had committed a criminal offence. However, the report highlighted that the local arrangements for claiming travel expenses at the time the complaint was made were flawed. The Panel therefore agreed that it should satisfy itself that the local arrangements now in place within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk (OPCCN) for reimbursing the expenses incurred by the Commissioner in carrying out his duties are sound.

After questioning the Commissioner's Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer and Internal Auditors about OPCCN's Travel and Subsistence Expenditure Scheme, the Panel resolved that the appropriate policies and procedures are now in place. It also agreed that it had some serious concerns about the nature of the complaints process, which had been unhelpful not only to Mr Bett, but Norfolk Constabulary, the Panel, as well as for the people of Norfolk. I was asked to communicate these concerns with you, in the strongest possible terms, and they are set out below.

- 1) Taking 14 months to undertake and publish a final report into an investigation of this type is wholly unacceptable.

The complaint was referred to the IPCC on 3 December 2013. It was not until 23 December 2014 that the IPCC issued a press release outlining that the final report was being prepared for publication and that no evidence of a criminal offence being committed by Mr Bett had been found. It then took until 17 February 2015 for the report itself to be published.

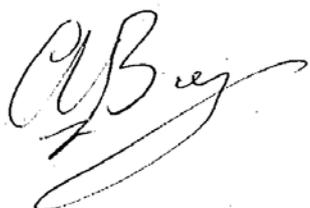
It is imperative that the IPCC is properly resourced to carry out its functions in a timely manner. The credibility of the process to handle complaint and conduct matters relating to a Police and Crime Commissioner has been put at risk. Furthermore, the ability of Mr Bett to work with and steer partners in tackling crime and disorder in Norfolk has also been impacted upon, and this is not a satisfactory situation for local residents.

- 2) Allowing an individual to make an allegation of this nature without any evidence, and so require a referral to the IPCC, is not acceptable.

The current legislation surrounding the handling of complaints and conduct matters does not allow Police and Crime Panels, or those delegated with the relevant powers and duties, to locally investigate a complaint of this nature. Amending their powers accordingly could assist in these matters being resolved in a more timely way.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alec Byrne', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Alec Byrne  
Chairman of the Norfolk Police and Crime Panel