



Home Office

Rt Hon Mike Penning MP
Minister for Policing,
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20 MAY 2015

Dear Alec

Thank you for your letter of 26 March 2015 about the handling of complaints relating to the conduct of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs).

I am grateful to you for taking the time to communicate your concerns about the recent managed investigation into the expenses claimed by PCC Bett in carrying out his duties. I am sure you will understand that we are unable to comment on individual cases.

More broadly, and as you will be aware, the Home Office has transferred resources to enable the IPCC to expand and take on more cases. In 2014/15, £18 million was re-allocated from the police settlement and, in December 2014, a further £30 million for 2015/16 was announced. To date, the IPCC have recruited over 100 new investigators. As part of the drive to increase the volume of cases it investigates, the IPCC's change programme is also focused on improving performance. Encouragingly, the most recent published IPCC figures show that completion rates for independent investigations are improving. I recognise there is more to do.

I have noted your concerns regarding the legislation permitting individuals to make allegations of criminality without any evidence. Whilst I understand that Police and Crime Panel members would welcome additional powers to locally investigate a complaint of this nature, it is important to remember that the independence of the IPCC is crucial in securing and maintaining public confidence in the complaints system. Where a member of the public feels a matter warrants criminal investigation, it is right that the IPCC offers an avenue, independent of influence of the police and government, to do so. Indeed it is open to any member of the public to take a complaint regarding possible criminal activity to the IPCC themselves, without first making a complaint to the PCP.

Your letter suggests that the legislation relating to the police complaints system could be improved to ensure that allegations of the type made against PCC Bett could be investigated more quickly. The IPCC is currently reviewing what changes it should make to its governance structures in order to improve decision making, taking into account the views of stakeholders. We expect this work to conclude in June. The IPCC recognises that there is more work for it to do to complete this work and we will pass on your views to the team at the IPCC.

Regards
MJP

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