

Northamptonshire Police
USE OF POWERS SCRUTINY PANEL
14-09-2023

Pete Basham and Titus Ajayi (Co-chairs) welcomed everyone to the meeting; whilst the number of attendees was low, CI Basham was grateful to everyone who had given up their time to support the Panel. He singled out the contribution of the Commissioner's Office, noting there were no young people in attendance only because of their work commitments.

ACTION: CI Basham to link in with the Force's Community Engagement Officers with a view to increasing the Panel's membership.

ACTION: ALL to promote the work of the Panel with a view to increasing its membership.

The Panel watched video clips of six incidents recorded by officers using their body-worn video cameras, three Stop & Search interactions, and three examples of Use of Force. The video clips were randomly selected from incidents occurring in July 2023 by the Community Co-chair.

Stop & Search

CASE 1: The female subject was a passenger in a car which initially failed to stop. When it was eventually stopped, the driver resisted arrest. Upon searching the vehicle, drugs and drugs paraphernalia were found, so the passenger (and her handbag) were also searched. Although no drugs were found on the subject or in her handbag, she was arrested on the basis of the drugs found in the vehicle. The Panel scored the searching officer at **90%**:

- *The contents of the lady's bag could have been put on plastic bag or something, and not on the bare floor*
- *Use newspaper to unpack the lady's handbag rather than on the floor*
- *The female officer took far too long to remove the handcuffs*
- *Good to see officer use gloves!*
- *It was not a tidy job to have emptied the contents of a female's handbag on the bare floor*
- *Subject could have been taken/apprehended at a corner, perhaps closer to the shop or by her car*

CASE 2: A male was seen on town centre CCTV to exchange an item with another male, who then passed something on to a third person. Officers detained and searched the second male on suspicion of possessing drugs. No drugs were found. The Panel scored the searching officer at **91%**:

- *Officer was polite and explained the reason for the stop & search well; no concerns*
- *Very good stop & search*

CASE 3: This interaction took place after dark, on a rainy evening; the quality of the video footage was poor. Officers encountered a male who they know was a missing person; intelligence indicated that he may be in possession of a knife which he keeps either in his backpack or in his jeans. No weapon was found, although the subject did have a multitool in his backpack. The Panel scored the searching officer at **86%**:

- *The officers forgot their gloves! They were very polite and patient with the subject*
- *No gloves; if knife was suspected, why no handcuffs?*
- *Use gloves when searching*
- *Officer had no gloves while searching bag or subject, or handling the blade*
- *The officers (as far as visible) did not have PPE on. Bending down with a suspect (who may have had a weapon) was putting the officer in undue danger*
- *Engagement between officers and young person was very good; officers were respectful and engaging*

Use of Force

CASE 4: Officers attended an incident outside a nightclub in Wellingborough and arrested a suspect for assaulting one of the door staff. The suspect was placed in a police vehicle with an officer whilst the others attempted to disperse the bystanders. The suspect's father, intoxicated, confronted various officers, insistent on accompanying his son to custody. He then attacked an officer, grabbing him by the throat, and was hauled off, continuing to resist. The male was sprayed with PAVA, "red dotted", and Tasered before being arrested and placed in handcuffs. The Panel scored the officer who fired the Taser at **68%**:

- *With the benefit of hindsight, a lone officer shouldn't be left with suspect in a vehicle – there were enough officers at the scene*
- *The response of the officers to an attack on colleagues is highly commendable – team work!!*
- *Not sure if I would have shot [Tasered] so close to colleagues*
- *Language barriers; Restraining techniques*
- *Why not cuff him straight away rather than using Taser?*
- *Evidence collection is evident*
- *Use of gloves observed even in heightened situation*
- *Officer gives clear instructions; took lead*
- *From what I saw, their approach and reactions were appropriate. Given the circumstances, it was appropriate for Taser – officers were quick to respond to protect their colleague; no officers should be subject to the behaviours of the subject*

CASE 5: Officers respond to intelligence that four unknown males with balaclavas, knives and drugs are present in a residential area. Upon their arrival, one of the males jumps from a window and runs off; he is seen to discard items over a wall. He is tracked by a police dog handler, who "red dots" him and detains him for a search in an enclosed courtyard. The Panel scored the dog handler at **88%**:

- *The assistance provided by the residents to enable the arrest of the subject*
- *Dog not secure; Clear “red dot” warnings*
- *Good job done by officer with the dog*
- *Officer’s explanation whilst fastening the handcuffs was not clear*
- *Appropriate use of red dot and handcuffs – no concerns*

CASE 6: This was a long incident so the Panel could not be shown the full footage of officers – both inside and outside the house – negotiating with the suspect. Officers were called to a burglary incident. On arrival, a male was in the kitchen where it appeared from the smoke alarm that he had set a fire; the fire risk was unknown (and not addressed until the male had been escorted out of the house). The occupants were evacuated safely, and the male removed himself from the kitchen and into a back room. He told the officers that he had two knives which he would use to stab first them and then himself if they attempted to enter the room. When he emerged, he was seen to be holding a knife against his own throat. Officers used PAVA spray and a drawn (but not “red dotted”) Taser to control and arrest the suspect and place him in handcuffs. The Panel scored the arresting officer at **98%**:

- *The patience and negotiation skills of the officers – highly commendable*
- *Very calm; a good job by the officers; superb; tops; 100%*
- *The officer demonstrated patience, and consideration for subject; humanity is clear. Well done officer*
- *I believe the situation needed specialist mental healthcare. Overall, the officers communicated clearly and “negotiations” went well*
- *This was a really good piece of work where officers did everything to protect the subject*
- *Officer kept control – second (female) officer’s approach was calm and also controlled.*
- *Excellent approach by both officers – they were very patient!*

ACTION: CI Basham to share with the Panel at a future discussion meeting any feedback on Stop & Search given by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services as a result of its on-going inspection of the Force.

The Community Co-chair thanked everyone for coming, regretting the unavoidable absence of any young people, who invariably added a different dimension to the Panel’s deliberations. He echoed CI Basham’s comments about recruiting more members, noting the benefits of considering a wide range of opinions.