

Statement 24 October 2013

by Ron Ball, Police & Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire

Andy Parker the Chief Constable gave a full account of his position at the Home Affairs Select Committee and I welcome and support his apology to Mr Mitchell MP for the conduct of the Warwickshire officer.

I would like to make my own position clear:

I have never supported the actions of the police officers following the meeting with Mr Mitchell. I believe they should not have been involved in a political campaign in this way and their actions have been hugely damaging to the public perception of the Police. That is why I called for and welcomed the apology for their actions repeated at the Committee yesterday. I believe that they should extend that apology to Mr Mitchell for the hurt their action has caused to him and his family.

I am very critical of the IPCC. I believe that they should and could have taken more responsibility for this investigation in such a serious matter of such huge public concern. With no resource implications they could have treated it as a managed investigation, which would have given the IPCC responsibility for the decision as well as the investigation. I am also very critical of the public comments by Ms Glass released to the media, which questioned the decision and which was widely interpreted as an attack on the integrity of senior officers who took that decision.

I welcome the statement from Ms Glass at the Select Committee that this was not her intention. However, I very much regret that careless wording in a letter which became public unfairly caused such damage to the public's trust and confidence in the Police.

It is not my role as Police and Crime Commissioner to become involved in the detail of disciplinary investigation carried out by the Police. However, I have been given regular updates by the Chief Constable on the course of the investigation. I had no reason to believe that the investigation had not been carried out correctly. The IPCC have confirmed that that is the case. Following my request for a report on the alleged changes to the report of the investigation, some concerns have been raised about the drafting of the final report. The Chief Constable of West Mercia has made a reasonable judgement that as a result of those irregularities the investigation should be reopened. Andy Parker, the Chief Constable of Warwickshire, has made an equally reasonable judgement that the irregularities are not so serious as to invalidate the reasoned decision of the Deputy Chief Constable, a very experienced officer. He decided the actions of the Warwickshire officer did not constitute misconduct. There is no new evidence to justify a review. That is the judgement of the Chief Constable, which I respect.

Ironically the public debate in the media sparked by the injudicious comments of the IPCC would in my view make any re-assessment of the decision very difficult, a view shared by my legal advisers.

I do understand that this sorry affair has caused huge damage to all the parties concerned and we need to find a way forward soon to give justice to Mr Mitchell and to ensure the officers are subject to fair process. I support the statement of the Chief Constable that we must find a way to draw a line under this matter so the Police can get back to catching criminals and protecting the people of Warwickshire from harm.

I will be continuing to have discussions with all the parties concerned to identify a way forward.

Ends.