

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR LEICESTERSHIRE

ETHICS, INTEGRITY AND COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

PAPER MARKED

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Report of	CHIEF CONSTABLE
Subject	ETHICAL DILEMMA
Date	FRIDAY 26 MARCH 2021 – 2:00 p.m.
Author	DCC NIXON

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek members' views on ethical scenario outlined within the Appendix.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that members consider the ethical scenarios and provide their views.

Commentary

3. The Terms of Reference provide for the Committee to be a forum for debate concerning professional standards and make recommendations about ethical dilemmas facing the Force.

Implications

Financial :	None.
Legal :	None.
Equality Impact Assessment :	None.
Risks and Impact :	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The scenarios provided are anonymised in order that no individual can be identified. The views of the Committee will be taken into account on any future similar incidences.• Public perception and reputational issues for the Force.
Link to Police and Crime Plan :	Links to the Nolan Principles and Code of Ethics contained within the Plan.
Communications :	Communications Plan will be approved by the Committee at this meeting.

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Vigils and Gatherings

Background Papers

None

Person to Contact

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Vigils and Gatherings

In March 2021 Sarah Everard was tragically killed and a police officer in the Metropolitan Police Service was arrested and charged with her kidnap and murder. The circumstances of the incident prompted national concern around female safety and policing. Sarah's death led to a proposed vigil on Clapham Common. The MPS discouraged the gathering, as did the Home Office, NPCC and Minister for Policing due to the Covid-19 pandemic and national lockdown that was in place. Specifically, The Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) Regulations 2020 restricted gatherings in public of more than two people. There are defined exceptions in the restriction, but none allowed for public protest or vigils.

On the 13th March the gathering went ahead against the requests of the bodies outlined above and it was attended by a significant number of people who were in close proximity to each other. The MPS provided a policing response to the gathering that led to arrests and the dispersal of attendees, at times through the use of physical force. The policing response was widely condemned as excessive and inappropriate.

Other force, such as Sussex Police, have also had to manage a policing response to gatherings in the name of Sarah and their responses have also faced criticism for being "too heavy handed".

The right to gather to pay respects or to raise political awareness of rights are fundamental actions of a democratic society that are normally supported positively by the police and partner agencies. However, under the exceptional national lockdown and statutory requirements they are not permitted and the police are left with the challenge of protecting public health through the use of legal powers in extremely emotive circumstances.

- 1) What are the committee's views on such gatherings taking place?
- 2) Should gatherings like this be dispersed and if so is the use of force appropriate?
- 3) What considerations should Leicestershire Police have if similar events are planned/occur in our force area?