

## Accelerated Misconduct Hearing of PC Wayne Couzens, held on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### Finding

I have had the benefit of the papers in advance of today and have read them carefully. I have listened to the case presented by the Appropriate Authority.

I have carefully considered the documentary evidence provided to me, including:

- The summary of what happened in the Investigation report, from page 9
- The statements certifying PC Couzens' pleas of guilty at pages 20 and 26

PC Couzens has not provided any response and therefore he has not made an admission of gross misconduct. There is therefore a requirement on me to formally find the matter proven as gross misconduct and I do so as follows:

I consider that PC Couzens has breached the Standards of Professional Behaviour in respect of:

- Discreditable Conduct - in that he pleaded guilty to and has been convicted of kidnap, rape and murder. He will be sentenced later this year. These are the facts of this case.

It will be obvious to all that behaving in this way, that is in committing these appalling crimes, and being convicted of a total of three of the most serious possible criminal offences in respect of this behaviour, discredits the police service and undermines confidence in it.

But it is right that I make it very clear that I find the facts of this case proved on the basis of the records of the pleas and the convictions and that these facts amount to a breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour that are required of police officers.

I have reminded myself that gross misconduct is a breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour so serious that dismissal would be justified. Applying that definition, I find the matter proven as gross misconduct. PC Couzens behaved in the manner described and can have been in no doubt whatsoever that this was criminal and harmful behaviour of the

utmost seriousness at every stage. His criminal convictions further reflect the gravity of the breach of Professional Standards. I therefore find the matter proven as gross misconduct.

## Outcome decision

Having considered the matter fully and having had regards to the nature and severity of the breaches of the Standards of Professional Behaviour, my decision is that PC Couzens is Dismissed without notice.

I would like to explain my rationale for that in detail now. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Before this Hearing started today we took some time to reflect privately in honour of Ms Everard, her family and friends. Our thoughts remain with them. We are so profoundly sorry.

I now return to my full rationale for my decision. The College of Policing Guidance on Outcomes in Police Misconduct Proceedings is a clear document that sets out the stages of the decision-making process. I have applied those Guidelines and that process to my decision-making today.

The first stage of deciding on the outcome is to assess the seriousness of the conduct. This covers the areas of the officer's culpability – that is, their blameworthiness or responsibility for their actions - the harm caused and any aggravating or mitigating factors.

The second stage is to keep in mind the purpose of the police misconduct regime. This has three elements:

- To maintain public confidence in and the reputation of the police service,
- To uphold high standards and deter misconduct, and
- To protect the public.

The police misconduct regime is not designed to punish police officers – it is about the reputation and standing of the profession as a whole.

The third stage is to choose the outcome that most appropriately fulfils the purpose given the seriousness of the conduct in question.

I will also consider PC Couzens' record of service during this decision-making process.

At all times I must be aware of and adhere to human rights and equality legislation. That is, of course, part of my approach at all times as a police officer.

Every case is different and I have made my decision on the specific facts of this individual case. And even though it is obvious that - in the highly unusual and deeply distressing circumstances of this case – there is only one outcome that can possibly be reached, it is right that my rationale is clearly set out, especially given that this Hearing has had to be held in private to avoid any risk of undermining ongoing criminal proceedings.

I have started by assessing the seriousness of the conduct.

In terms of culpability, PC Couzens has [REDACTED] committed the offences of kidnap, rape and murder. This Hearing has not gone into the detail of those offences, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] He had at every stage the option not to embark on this course of conduct and to move away from it and did not do so.

In addition, PC Couzens has pleaded guilty to and been convicted of three separate criminal offences of the utmost gravity. It is entirely unacceptable for police officers who are responsible for enforcing the law to break the law themselves. He was wholly responsible for his actions and his culpability is as high as it could be.

In terms of harm, I have placed weight on two factors. Firstly, and of course most importantly, in behaving as he did, PC Couzens has caused the worst possible actual harm to Ms Everard by taking her life. Secondly, he has without question harmed public confidence in and the reputation of the MPS by behaving in a way that is so contrary to the Met's values and the traditions of British policing.

There are aggravating factors to take into account. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. His actions have caused an appalling loss of trust and confidence in policing in London and far beyond.

There are no mitigating factors of any kind.

I have reviewed PC Couzens' record of service, and note his range of roles after joining the MPS in September 2018. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I explained above that the decision making process has three stages. I now move to the second stage, which is to keep in mind the purpose of the police misconduct regime. As I mentioned before, this has three elements:

- To maintain public confidence in and the reputation of the police service,
- To uphold high standards and deter misconduct, and
- To protect the public.

In behaving as he did, committing the offences of kidnap, rape and murder, and being convicted of three criminal offences in respect of that behaviour, PC Couzens has utterly discredited himself and the Metropolitan Police Service. He has betrayed everything we stand for.

Let me say first of all that any requirement for my decision to address the need to uphold high standards and deter misconduct is not required. PC Couzens' colleagues in the MPS and in wider policing are horrified, sickened and angered by what he has done.

So I have based my decision on the first and third purposes; those of maintaining public confidence in and the reputation of the police service and of protecting the public.

This was the most appallingly grave misconduct which undermines public confidence in policing as well as our reputation. The public could not possibly have confidence in PC Couzens to protect them if he behaves in this way and of course he must be dismissed in order to protect the public as well. Nor would the public have confidence in the MPS if we

appeared not to take criminal convictions and such behaviour by a police officer seriously, which would certainly be the case if I imposed any lesser sanction today.

And therefore as I move to the third stage of decision making, which is to choose the outcome that most appropriately fulfils the purpose given the seriousness of the conduct in question, it is obvious and it is my decision that nothing less than dismissal would fulfil the purpose of the police misconduct regime.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Ball'.

Assistant Commissioner Helen Ball QPM

16<sup>th</sup> July 2021