

## **In the Matter of Section 21 (2) of the Inquiries Act 2005**

### **Leveson Inquiry**

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#### **Statement of Simon Ash, Chief Constable of Suffolk Constabulary**

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I, Simon Ash, Chief Constable of Suffolk Constabulary make this statement in response to the Section 21 (2) Notice, issued by the Rt. Hon Lord Justice Leveson, on 5 January 2012.

This Statement seeks to address the 44 questions, outlined in Lord Justice Leveson's Section 21 Notice.

I have also added any other information, which I consider relevant to the Inquiry generally.

**(1) Who you are and a brief summary of your career history.**

I have a BA (Hons) Degree in Geography, MA in Organisational Management and a Diploma in Applied Criminology and Police Studies from Cambridge University.

After studying at Birmingham University, I joined Kent County Constabulary in 1982. There I held various positions through the ranks until 1993, when I was promoted to the rank of

Chief Inspector (Operations) in Folkestone. Two years later I was promoted to the rank of Superintendent and became Head of Personnel and then spent two years as Area Commander of Maidstone and Malling.

In 2001 I joined Hertfordshire Constabulary as Assistant Chief Constable, Operations, and held that position until 2003 when I was promoted to Deputy Chief Constable. As Deputy Chief Constable I was responsible for Organisational Intelligence, Human Resources and Corporate Communication.

On 4 June 2007 I joined Suffolk Constabulary as Chief Constable.

I am currently the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) national lead on Reward and Recognition and in that capacity I am the ACPO representative on the Police Negotiating Board, Police Advisory Board and Police Staff Council. In this role I am currently involved with work on pay reform for the service, in particular the Winsor review of pay and conditions.

Suffolk is a county with a population of approximately 700,000. The main urban area is Ipswich, with a number of smaller towns located around the county. There are large expanses of rural areas and with that comes a large farming industry. Other significant places include the Port of Felixstowe (the largest container port in the country), Sizewell Nuclear Power Station, USAF personnel stationed at bases at Mildenhall and Lakenheath, the home of British horse racing in Newmarket and Ipswich Town Football Club.

Suffolk Constabulary is one of the smallest police forces in the country. It is a low cost force with the second lowest cost per head of population in the country. Currently the force has 1196 police officers and 1040 police staff (including Police Community Support Officers) and a budget of £113 million. We are in the first year of the government's four-year comprehensive spending review period that has presented significant financial challenges for the force. Plans for meeting this challenge project savings of £16.1m over a five-year period. A significant proportion of these savings has and will come from a large-scale collaboration programme with our colleagues in Norfolk Constabulary.

The collaboration programme included the creation of a joint Corporate Communications Department under a single departmental head in July 2011.

**(2) What were your first impressions, upon taking office as Chief Constable of Suffolk Constabulary, about the culture of relations with the media which you had inherited?**

When I arrived in Suffolk there had been an investigation involving covert techniques into leaks to the local media. This had concerned the suspected inappropriate disclosure of information to the media by a serving officer. Editors of the local newspapers became aware of the investigation and reacted negatively. I will cover the issue of leaks in more detail in later questions but the point is that I wanted to get relationships onto a positive and professional basis when I arrived so I worked hard to develop relationships with these editors.

In provincial Suffolk, there are very limited dealings with national media. I have no ongoing relationships with anyone in the national media. The only real involvement I have had with the national media relates to the handling of Operation Sumac, the investigation into the murder of five women in Ipswich in 2006. This pre-dated me joining the Force, but I sensed the Force had dealt with the local, national and international media extremely well under intense scrutiny. I was in Suffolk for the trial of Steve Wright that attracted similar attention and after his conviction I headed a joint press conference with the Crown Prosecution Service which was shown on national news bulletins at the time.

The most significant relationships that Suffolk Constabulary has with the media are with the local media – press, radio and television.

The Force had a good sized Corporate Communications Department that provided the organisational interface with the media on a day-to-day basis. They advised me on handling media issues and I found them to be very competent. I judged the relationship between Corporate Communications staff and the local media to be professional and appropriate.

In general terms I found officers and staff to be very cautious in their dealings with the media in that they tended to be protective of information and unwilling to readily provide information in a timely way without it being filtered through the Corporate Communications Department. This was particularly evident through the Force Operations Room.

**(3) Describe the personal contact which you currently have with the media, both locally and nationally. The Inquiry would like an overall picture of the type,**

**frequency, duration and content of your contact with the media, both locally and nationally, during your tenure as Chief Constable of Suffolk Constabulary.**

My dealings with the national media are mainly through my role as the ACPO Reward and Recognition Portfolio Lead that focuses on matters relating to pay and conditions for police officers and police staff. This is almost solely through the ACPO Press Office and has included press releases for national media. I have in the past given interviews to Police Review when it existed and Police Professional in respect of my national role. However this has only been approximately once a year.

The national media coverage for the Steve Wright trial was through the Senior Investigating Officer and the Corporate Communications Department. As referred to in the previous question, I had no hands on dealings other than being kept briefed internally and heading the press conference after the conviction. Similarly, requests for documentaries following this were handled in the same way.

The contact that I have with the media is almost exclusively with the local media – radio, television and press. The local media contact I have I will expand upon below. As far as dealing with the national media is concerned, this has been almost solely confined to one period in early 2008 and followed the trial and conviction of Steve Wright for the murder of five women in Ipswich in December 2006. I joined Suffolk in June 2007 and so was not with the Force during those extraordinary events.

**Local Radio**

The majority of contact that I have with local radio is giving interviews to BBC Radio Suffolk with whom I have an excellent working relationship. I often attend their studios (once every 2–3 months) in Ipswich to give interviews on a variety of current topics relating to policing and periodically attend to take part in ‘phone-ins’, taking questions live on air from members of the public. Radio Suffolk has been very supportive of a number of joint initiatives. Two particular ones are the ‘Bin a Blade’ Knife Amnesty campaign and our drive to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour.

‘Bin a Blade’ was inspired by 18 year old Holly Watson whose brother Lewis was fatally stabbed in Sudbury, Suffolk in 2009. Holly began an anti knife campaign and to assist that, with the support of Radio Suffolk, a year long knife amnesty was introduced in the county. Four permanent ‘knife bins’ were located outside four police stations around Suffolk,

supplemented by two 'mobile bins', for people to voluntarily dispose of knives that could otherwise be used as weapons. The campaign has been very successful.

The campaign to reduce anti-social behaviour followed the Constabulary having low levels of performance for the Governments 'public confidence' target and receiving a 'poor' grade from HMIC for delivering the Policing Pledge, both in 2009. As a result and as part of the action plan to address these issues, the Constabulary actively engaged with Radio Suffolk and in particular its breakfast show presenter Mark Murphy. He already had a successful campaign running to tackle litter and fly tipping called 'Don't be a Tosser'. This was expanded to work closely with the police to tackle anti-social behaviour more broadly.

There are other local radio stations, in particular Heart FM, Town 102 FM, Beach FM and community radio stations. My contact with them is much less and generally limited to occasional short interviews usually by telephone for their news bulletins on current policing issues or initiatives. However, I am always willing to offer myself for interviews to any of these stations, irrespective of who it is.

#### Television

My contact with television stations is again confined to the local BBC and ITV stations and giving occasional interviews for their respective news programmes.

#### Press

At a personal level, my contact with the local press is not regular – the regular provision of quotes and information is usually via agreed press releases through the Corporate Communications Department. However, I do have occasional personal contact with what is a strong local press in Suffolk. The Archant company runs two particular local papers – the morning East Anglian Daily Times (EADT) which covers much of Suffolk and the Evening Star (recently re-named the Ipswich Star) which is more focused on the Ipswich area.

I have occasional phone calls with the two editors of these papers and have also attended their offices for meetings, but these are few and far between – approximately every 6 months.

The relationship with these two papers in particular is an important one and it is important to highlight that Suffolk has three daily newspapers, the other being the Eastern Daily Press (based in Norfolk), which covers the north of the county. Suffolk is fairly unique in that it is a

small county but has three local daily newspapers, so there are many news columns to fill. Information from the police is therefore important.

There are also other papers covering other parts of the county, these include the Bury Free Press, Lowestoft Journal and Newmarket Journal, although these have a lesser demand and I know the Editors of these publications less well.

We usually invite the local media to an annual briefing that presents an opportunity for them to meet with Chief Constable and other senior officers and updates them on current policing matters. The last of these was on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2011. This gave myself and Joanna Spicer, the Chairman of Suffolk Police Authority, an opportunity to update the media on how Suffolk Constabulary and Suffolk Police Authority are addressing the significant financial cuts that we are facing.

**(4) Describe what you are seeking to gain for Suffolk Constabulary through your personal contacts with the media.**

My overarching aim through my personal contact with the media is to build trust and confidence in policing in Suffolk.

I have no on-going relationship with anyone from the national media – all my dealings tend to be ad hoc and driven by events.

I value a positive relationship with the local media in all its forms across Suffolk. This provides me with an opportunity to achieve core policing functions of preventing and detecting crime. Prevention is achieved through specific crime prevention campaigns, for example 'Bin A Blade', and the promulgation of key preventative messages. The detection of crime is enhanced by accurate and timely reporting of offences in the media that regularly include an appeal for witnesses and information encouraging people to contact the police directly or via the Crimestoppers facility where they can remain anonymous if desired.

We are fortunate in Suffolk to have a strong local media, including two daily newspapers based in the county, which not only provides us with an opportunity to highlight our work to keep local people safe but also holds us to account for the way in which we police our county.

In my dealings with the local media, I am looking primarily to ensure that local people have an understanding of our work and the challenges we face as well as knowing about our successes, whether they involve an issue that is countywide or specific to a particular neighbourhood.

Our Media Liaison Procedure (Exhibit SA/1) states that “the appropriate person” should offer comment or conduct interviews with the media on any given subject. As such, I expect and encourage my local officers, liaising closely with the Corporate Communications Department, to highlight the good work they are doing in our districts and neighbourhoods.

However, when it comes to policing matters affecting the whole county or comments on issues of Constabulary policy, either I, or another senior officer, take the lead. I attach some examples, as follows:

Crime Falls As Suffolk Gets Safer press release – Exhibit SA/2

HMIC: Demanding Times: the Frontline and Police Visibility – Suffolk Constabulary response – Exhibit SA/3

HMIC: Force financial Healthcheck – Suffolk Constabulary response – Exhibit SA/4

Council Tax issues – joint Constabulary/Police Authority release – Exhibit SA/5

Launch of the Safer Suffolk Foundation press release – Exhibit SA/6

Workplace Equality Index press release – Exhibit SA/7

Managing the force reputation is important. With such a strong local media in Suffolk, which holds us rigorously to account, it is inevitable that negative headlines will sometimes emerge. Through my relationship with the local media, I expect an opportunity for me personally, or a representative of the Constabulary, to receive fair coverage and be given a suitable opportunity to get our points across – and this is generally the case.

A specific example of when I proactively sought assistance from the local media was following our ‘poor’ HMIC policing pledge grading in 2009 – my aim was to improve our public confidence figures as measured by the British Crime Survey. I approached Mark Murphy the presenter of the Radio Suffolk Breakfast Show to seek his assistance. He

already had a successful anti-litter campaign under the 'Don't Be A Tosser' banner. We agreed to widen this campaign to tackle anti-social behaviour more broadly. This proved to be an important element of our plan that resulted in improved public confidence.

Another example where I have sought to positively promote the Constabulary is through support for the annual "Stars of Suffolk" awards, organised by the Evening Star and Suffolk County Council, where I have ensured that the Constabulary has supported the nomination of individuals who have made a real difference to safety in their local community.

- (5) **Describe in general terms and using illustrative examples what you consider the media, both locally and nationally, has been seeking from you in your personal dealing with them during your time as Chief Constable of Suffolk Constabulary.**

A relationship with the national media is not a feature of my job. I respond to issues arising from my ACPO work through the ACPO Press Office but I have no on-going relationship with members of the national media.

Maintaining a positive relationship with my local media is an important feature of my job. For the vast majority of the time I believe the media is very satisfied with the service it receives from the Constabulary particularly through the Corporate Communications Department. I also seek to make myself available for interview and comment when I consider it to be appropriate and as a result receive good coverage in the local media.

The local media want stories in a timely fashion. The main rubbing points when they have occurred have related to incidents where we have not released basic information about events as quickly as the local media would like.

Sometimes, this is for justifiable reasons, for example when it might compromise an investigation or when next of kin have not been informed in the case of suspicious deaths, but on occasions our officers and staff have not been confident to release material that could and should have been released at the earliest opportunity.

For example, we had an incident in which three men escaped from a secure hospital in Palgrave just before 0100 hours on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2011, causing one member of staff



a minor injury in the process. All three men were being held in the secure hospital after committing serious violent offences.

The on-call press officer was not called until 0800 hours some seven hours later. A press release was issued at 1207 hours once the full facts, descriptions and photographs were obtained and the relevant officer and hospital press office had signed it off.

The following day, the East Anglian Daily Times ran a story criticising the delay in informing the public about the incident.

On the few occasions when our response has fallen short of expectations we have responded positively to well founded criticism to address the issues highlighted. In this particular case we arranged media liaison training for all our Force Operations Room Inspectors, aimed at giving them the confidence and the tools to be far more effective in their dealings with the media.

The training included inputs from representatives of both the local print and broadcast media, to help foster a greater understanding of the pressures and needs of our local news teams.

It also included instructions on how to use Twitter and update our on-line news service, in recognition of the fact that we live in a world of 24-hour news, where every media outlet has its own website.

Our local media also want support for local campaigns, which is usually to our mutual benefit. As mentioned in Question 4, I worked with BBC Radio Suffolk's Mark Murphy on his anti-litter "Don't Be A Tosser" campaign in both 2010 and 2011, which was broadened to include anti-social behaviour in its many forms. As a result of this we have been able to highlight and promote the good work of our Safer Neighbourhood Teams across the county, with an emphasis on how they are working with partners and local communities to deal with a range of issues.

The aim was to increase public confidence in the work of the police and local councils – and, subsequently, our British Crime Survey results on public confidence showed a significant up turn following a range of activities associated with this high profile media campaign.

I also worked closely with BBC Radio Suffolk during 2011 on the Bin A Blade campaign. Inspired by local anti-knife crime campaigner Holly Watson, the amnesty was launched in December 2010. The campaign followed an interview where I was challenged on-air by Mark Murphy as to why the police only operated knife amnesties when someone was killed. From this challenge a partnership was formed between Radio Suffolk, Holly Watson and the Constabulary to develop a knife amnesty together with other educational materials and messages to deter young people from carrying a knife. Initially three static amnesty bins were put in place outside Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft Police Stations; these were then joined by two mobile bins touring Suffolk's smaller stations and a fourth static bin at Mildenhall Police Station. As a result, the year-long campaign resulted in more than 6000 knives being handed in across the county alongside strong anti-knife crime messages over a sustained period. The campaign captured the imagination of the local community and contributed to making the county safe.

(6) **To what extent have you accepted hospitality from the media whilst Chief Constable?**

(7) **Insofar as you have accepted hospitality from the media, what was the nature of the hospitality that you accepted?**

6 & 7.

When I have met editors and presenters at their offices and studios I have only ever had tea or coffee and light refreshments.

I have accepted hospitality on one occasion from the local media company Archant and in particular, the Editor of the East Anglian Daily Times. This was in January 2011 when I accepted an invitation to watch the Ipswich Town v Arsenal football match in their executive box with other civic dignitaries who had been invited. This was recorded in the Suffolk Chief Officers Hospitality Register that is presented as Exhibit SA/8.

(8) **To what extent have you provided hospitality for the media on behalf of Suffolk Constabulary whilst Chief Constable?**

(9) **Insofar as you have provided hospitality to the media, what was the nature of the hospitality that you accepted?**

8 & 9.

Suffolk Constabulary has provided very occasional hospitality for the media. This has been confined to light refreshments at Media Briefings with senior leaders of the force.

Exceptionally at one such briefing and networking event to build relationships in January 2010, a curry meal was provided for attendees in the canteen at Police Headquarters.

The provision of hospitality by Constabulary personnel is covered within section 10 of Suffolk Constabulary's 'Professional Standards Handbook' - please see Exhibit SA/9. The Handbook was produced in 2005 and is currently undergoing a review although the content continues to be relevant.

**(10) What mechanisms are in place to monitor and record hospitality as between the Chief Constable and the media?**

An electronic Hospitality Register exists for Chief Officers (Exhibit SA/8). Any hospitality or gift received from outside agencies is recorded within this register.

**(11) What mechanisms are in place to monitor and record meetings with the media generally?**

Since the latter part of 2011, the Constabulary has invested in the A1 media "Spotlight" management information system for the new Corporate Communications Department (now shared with Norfolk Constabulary under our collaborative arrangements).

This system logs calls for service, responses, "if asked statements" and information relating to the reactive and proactive issue of all operational and corporate information to the public. It also keeps records of contacts with journalists and other individuals of note, for example local politicians and MPs, to enable the professional management of corporate communications.

Corporate Communications staff are expected to record details of their contacts with journalists and that includes the dates and the nature of the meetings.

The system was already in use in Norfolk Constabulary and was adopted by Suffolk when the joint Corporate Communications Department was created in July 2011. Prior to this Suffolk had no procedure or system for recording meetings with journalists. This electronic system of recording has enabled us bring more rigour to this area of our business.

Managing Media Relationships Guidance (Exhibit SA/10) has been issued to both Suffolk and Norfolk forces via the collaboration portal website following approval by both Chief

Officer teams in October 2011 to ensure that contacts with the media by officers and staff throughout the Force are reported to the Corporate Communications Department and recorded within this system.

**(12) Do you ever discuss the media, or media coverage, with politicians (local or national)? If so, how important is such communication and why?**

I do not routinely discuss the media or media coverage with any politicians. There have been rare occasions when I have challenged or clarified points politicians have made in the media. I occasionally meet with the MP's for Suffolk constituencies but not to specifically discuss media issues.

I do work closely on media issues with the Police Authority that includes local politicians (nine out of seventeen members are county councillors). The current Chairman is a county councillor as was her predecessor. Part of our working relationship involves responding to media enquiries about a range of policing matters and issuing proactive press releases when appropriate.

**(13) Have you any known, or sensed, that a politician has put pressure on you to take a particular course of action as a result of lobbying or influence exerted on that politician by the media? If so, please explain (although you need not identify the politician at this stage if you do not wish to do so).**

No

**(14) Has the prominence which politicians have given to subjects ever given rise to pressure to alter policing priorities so as to allocate more priority to the subject being given prominence by the politicians? If so, please explain.**

No. I should refer to the fact that the Police Authority includes local politicians. The Authority has a duty to consult with local communities regarding policing priorities. The Authority publishes a Policing Plan annually that is developed in close consultation with me as Chief Constable and other members of the Constabulary. Whilst this process might present such opportunities to exert pressure, I have never sensed it or felt under any such pressure and have only ever found the Authority to approach this in a thoroughly professional manner.

(15) Are contacts with the media restricted to certain staff or are all staff able to deal with the media?

We have an open, positive policy for dealing with the media, which states that every member of staff has a responsibility for promoting the work of Suffolk Constabulary and maintaining good media relations.

Furthermore, it adds that requests from the media for information, comment and interviews should be dealt with “by the appropriate person” – and that would normally be the officer or member of staff who knows the most about the subject or incident and can respond authoritatively to any questions.

I trust my officers and staff to act professionally when speaking to the media and believe that our media liaison procedure encourages them to put themselves forward to promote their work.

I expect the majority of contact with media representatives to be facilitated through the staff in the Corporate Communications Department who deal, on a daily basis, with requests from the media as well as proactively issuing news and information. Officers and staff are strongly encouraged to seek advice and assistance from the Corporate Communications team in advance of any contact. Usually, contact is actively facilitated by the news team who seek the appropriate ‘talking head’ to represent the Constabulary view.

Our Media Liaison Procedure also provides our personnel with a comprehensive general guide to media liaison. Please see Exhibit SA/1 for further information.

(16) What do you expect Suffolk Constabulary to gain from such contacts with the media?

Overall my aim is to build trust and confidence in the Constabulary and our policing of the county.

I expect that professional contact with the media will result in the Constabulary being fairly and accurately reported in the news media, particularly the titles and broadcast media that target the county or parts of it. Policing is a complex business and I believe it is helpful for the news media to have an appreciation of that complexity. They are unlikely to gain

sufficient background knowledge of what we do and how we do it unless they are able to converse regularly through briefings with police officers and staff carrying out the job.

I believe healthy media contacts are those contacts which are timely and regular with opportunities to discuss policing issues affecting the way the Constabulary discharges its duties to the public. Suffolk Constabulary – and therefore Suffolk people – gain from having an informed news media that are able to reflect the business of the Constabulary in an unfettered way. In many ways, the local news media, are part of the ‘checks and balances’ for the public to be assured that their police service is effective and efficient.

**(17) What do the media seek from such contacts with your personnel?**

The local media are commercial concerns that ultimately need to be run as successful businesses. However, they are also part of the local community and have a strong sense of duty to fulfil a role in reporting and commenting on issues of local interest and concern. The issue of safety is an important public concern and therefore attracts considerable media attention.

Media representatives locally seek accurate, up-to-date information and comments that help them to construct news and feature articles for their newspaper, radio or television station or online service.

They are working in a tough commercial environment and want to be offering their audiences the best service they can, based on timely updates, ahead of their competitors.

The police and the local media are both part of the local community and often share similar objectives in terms of promoting the county and keeping it safe. There is always a high interest in the work of the police, the pressures we face and the crimes and other issues we are dealing with. This interest generates a significant appetite to report on events happening in the county and a desire for information or comment from the police.

We share a desire to prevent crime and therefore there is a willingness to provide advice and guidance on a range of issues that have included domestic violence, hate crime and stopping drink driving. This has on occasions developed into broader campaigns, for example ‘Bin A Blade’ as previously described.

We share a desire to detect offences that occur in the county. The details of these offences are extensively reported but always present opportunities to make appeals for witnesses and information. Convictions at court are also widely reported and on occasions 'naming and shaming' offenders particularly in the case of drink drive cases. This also presents opportunities to highlight those occasions when the courts order the seizure of assets from criminals promoting the message that crime does not pay.

The local media also has an important role in holding the police to account in terms of their operational efficiency and how they spend public money. To help them do this, they expect clear and honest answers, delivered in a timely fashion, to any questions they have.

**(18) What hospitality are your personnel permitted to accept from the media? Inter alia, are they entitled to accept a meal or a drink from a journalist?**

Advice on giving and receiving hospitality is contained in Section 10 of the Professional Standards Handbook (Exhibit SA/9). The advice relates to giving and accepting hospitality in all situations not just a media context.

**(19) What hospitality are your personnel permitted to afford to the media?**

Please see answer to question 18.

Force personnel are permitted to offer drinks and light refreshments at meetings and events held on our premises.

The Head of Corporate Communications is issued with a corporate Visa card. Use of the card is monitored by a Chief Officer who authorises expenditure against the production of receipts. This card has been used to pay for light refreshments. For example, it was used on 14th July 2011 to purchase dinner for four people which included the Editor of Police Professional magazine (receipt is presented as Exhibit SA/11) and on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2011 to purchase light refreshments at a meeting with the Editor of the Eastern Daily Press (receipt is presented as Exhibit SA/12).

**(20) What mechanisms are in place to record hospitality as between the media and your personnel?**

For hospitality provided within the Force there is a procedure that requires the individual to obtain a purchase order number from the Finance Department. Details are then recorded on our electronic procurement system which includes the name of the person requesting, the line manager authorising, the supplier of any goods or services, the nature of the event and the budget code it will be charged to. This system is fully audited and researchable.

Where refreshments are provided away from police premises the cost would be claimed under our Expenses Procedure. This sets out the requirement for receipts and authorisation from a line manager.

**(21) How (if at all) is hospitality between Suffolk Constabulary (including yourself) and the media controlled and/or regulated?**

If hospitality is being provided it will be in accordance with the procedure referred to in the answer to Question 20. If we are receiving hospitality then it should be recorded in the appropriate register. If Chief Officers receive hospitality, this is recorded in the electronic Chief Officers Hospitality Register (Exhibit SA/8) which is maintained by Executive Services (the support team to the Chief Officers). For other Constabulary personnel, this is recorded in the Professional Standards Department Gift Register which is a hard copy register, although work is currently underway to change this into an electronic version. The Finance Department scrutinises claims for hospitality to ensure they meet the requirements of the procedure.

**(22) Are the hospitality rules governing contact between Suffolk Constabulary personnel (including yourself) and the media different from those covering contact with other third parties? If so, what are the differences?**

The rules are the same for contact with all third parties.

**(23) What policies and procedures are in place to record contact between: (a) yourself and the media; (b) senior managers and the media; (c) other personnel and the media. For the avoidance of doubt please answer in relation to both formal and informal communications.**

Our current procedure for recording contact with the media, which covers all Constabulary officers and staff, is detailed in my answer to Question 11. At present our procedure does not draw a distinction between formal and informal communications.



The Managing Media Relationships Guidance (Exhibit SA/10) referred to in question 11 was based on an advisory note from the ACPO Communication Advisory Group. It says that all officers and staff should seek guidance from Corporate Communications staff on any media policy matters and should inform the Corporate Communications Department of any interview requests or meeting with media representatives so that they can be logged.

**(24) Are records of hospitality and other contact with the media audited and/or policed and, if so, how and by whom?**

The Professional Standards Department maintains and audits the Professional Standards Department Gift Register in respect of all officers and staff with the exception of Chief Officers.

The current procedure is set out within section 9 of the Professional Standards Handbook (Exhibit SA/9) and requires each application to be forwarded to the Chief Inspector of the PSD who makes an assessment as to whether the gratuity or hospitality is to be permitted. The assessment is considered against the criteria contained within the Professional Standards Handbook. The applicant is notified of the result and an entry retained in the register providing an audit trail if required.

The register for Chief Officers is maintained by Executive Services (the team that supports the Chief Officers). At present this is not subject to audit but a new process is planned whereby the Police Authority and in due course the Police and Crime Commissioner will audit the register.

As Chief Constable I have a corporate credit card. The Chief Executive of the Police Authority signs off my expenditure and I perform a reciprocal arrangement in respect of his expenditure. The Chairman of the Police Authority instigated this arrangement.

**(25) In your opinion are the policies and procedures described above: (a) working effectively; (b) sufficient; and (c) capable of improvement.**

The current policies and procedures have been adequate for the Constabulary to date but are definitely capable of improvement.

In December 2011 HMIC published their report 'Without Fear or Favour – a review of police relationships'. This report contained a set of 'self-check integrity questions for Forces and Authorities'. I have established a working group chaired by my Deputy Chief Constable to assess our organisation against the checklist and develop a plan of action to ensure we meet the required standards.

It is apparent on an initial assessment that we need to review and update our policy, move from a paper based to an electronic hospitality register, promote its use more extensively and strengthen our oversight arrangements.

**(26) What systems, policies and procedures are in place in Suffolk Constabulary to ensure that all members of the force (including civilian employees) know what is and what is not appropriate contact with the media?**

The values of our organisation are contained in our Policing Plan and underpin the culture of the organisation. We are committed to:

- Acting with integrity at all times
- Treating everyone with fairness and respect
- Being open and honest
- Listening to people and responding to what we hear
- Maintaining the highest professional standards
- Making a positive difference in all we do
- Being innovative in delivering our services

I would expect our officers and staff to act in accordance with those values when they have contact with the media, or indeed anyone external to the organisation.

The Media Liaison Procedure (Exhibit SA/1) provides extensive guidance to officers and staff in terms of their relationships with the media. This is accessible to all officers and staff through the Force intranet at all times. The content of this procedure is communicated and reinforced through a range of training courses.

As already detailed the Constabulary has a highly professional and competent Corporate Communications Department that is recognised as the first port of call for officers and staff needing advice and guidance regarding media relations.

The Managing Media Relationships guidance (Exhibit SA/10) available to personnel in both Suffolk and Norfolk, as previously referred to outlines the requirement for all officers and staff to record contacts with the media through the Corporate Communications Department.

**(27) Are you satisfied that the policies and procedures described above are sufficient and working effectively? Do you consider that they are capable of improvement?**

The existing policies and procedures are working effectively and are well supported by the systems operated by the Corporate Communications Department.

As previously referred to, in December 2011 HMIC published their report 'Without Fear or Favour – a review of police relationships'. This report contained a set of 'self-check integrity questions for Forces and Authorities'. I have established a working group chaired by my Deputy Chief Constable to assess our organisation against the checklist and develop a plan of action to ensure we meet the required standards.

I have no doubt that through this exercise we will refine and improve our policies and procedures building upon our sound foundation.

**(28) What training is in place in Suffolk Constabulary to ensure that all members of the force (including civilian employees) know what is and what is not appropriate contact with the media?**

The organisational values listed in my response to Question 26 are a 'golden thread' that can be found in all training inputs.

New officers and staff receive initial training and induction that explicitly addresses the purpose, values, strategic aspirations and policing priorities for the Constabulary. They also receive training in respect of the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act. This training outlines the responsibility of each individual, and the organisation, in maintaining data security and incorporates the inappropriate sharing of information with any individual or organisation.

Members of the Professional Standards Department provide an input on standards of professional behaviour that is relevant to the issue of relationships with the media (Exhibit SA/13 contains the presentation)

In addition to initial training and induction there is targeted bespoke training that addresses issues of integrity and relationship management with the media. Specific media masterclasses have been held for frontline managers and supervisors. Training sessions have been tailored to address identified needs, for example specific training was provided to Inspectors working in the Force Operations Room. In addition training for specific roles, for example Senior Investigating Officer and Family Liaison Officer, contain elements relating to media relations.

Command training relating to critical incidents, public order and firearms cover the breadth of managing these often complex incidents and events. This will always include the dimension of handling the media and media relations.

**(29) To what extent have leaks from Suffolk Constabulary to the media been a problem during your tenure as Chief Constable?**

The issue of leaks to the media has not been a significant problem while I have been with the Constabulary.

During 2011 there were leaks from the organisation to the media in the context of organisational change that was being planned. Specifically this related to two issues, firstly a planned re-structuring of our Roads Policing Unit and secondly, proposals to compulsorily retire police officers under Regulation 19, Police Pension Regulations 1987. Our proposals around both matters were reported in the local press when both were still subject of internal consultation and discussion with the Police Authority.

My assessment was that the leaks were most likely to have come from disgruntled officers and staff affected by the proposals. Such was my level of concern that I discussed the matter with the Staff Association and Unison representatives and we published a joint message to the Force, a copy of which is presented as Exhibit SA/14. This stressed the unacceptable situation that had arisen of unauthorised information being passed to the media. This was extremely unhelpful to the organisation and individuals whose jobs were under threat at a time of extreme financial challenge.

**(30) What systems and procedures are in place to identify, respond to and detect the source of leaks?**

Suffolk Constabulary has an 'Anti Corruption Intelligence Unit' (ACIU). This unit was established in 2002 and now has significant experience dealing with all forms of potential corruption. A number of different reporting mechanisms are in place for officers and staff including:

- Third party disclosure via a line manager
- Third party disclosure via a Federation Representative
- Non-confidential telephone call to a member of the ACIU
- Non-confidential email to a member of the ACIU
- A face-to-face meeting with a member of the ACIU
- Use of the confidential reporting hotline telephone
- Use of the confidential reporting email system

The ACIU has the technical capability to research all force telephone systems to identify calls of concern. It also has the technical capability to covertly monitor any force computer to establish if any external communications are inappropriate.

**(31) How many investigations have been conducted into actual or suspected leaks from Suffolk Constabulary to the media been commenced during the last 5 years and how many have led to the successful identification of the source of the leak. What was the outcome of the other investigations?**

In the last five years there have been five investigations into suspected leaks:

- 2006 – Leak to a local media publication relating to the reopening of a rape investigation. An internal enquiry was commenced into the leak and, following telephone work a detective constable was identified as a suspect. Whilst contact between the officer and the journalist could be proven there was no evidence of actual disclosure. No misconduct case was brought against the officer due to a lack of evidence.
- 2006 – Leak to a local media publication that an officer had been caught drink driving. An enquiry was commenced but no suspect identified.
- 2009 – Leak to a local media publication about resourcing levels in Ipswich. An enquiry was commenced but no suspect identified.

- 2011 – Leak to a local media publication relating to details of a Professional Standards Department investigation into a serving police officer possessing images of child pornography. An enquiry was commenced but no suspect identified.
- 2011 - Leaks to a local media publication concerning a restructure of part of the Force and compulsory retirement of officers under the Regulation A19 procedure. An enquiry was commenced and several potential sources of the leaks identified. It was concluded that more than one officer or member of staff was probably involved, and that the primary motive behind the disclosures was most likely disaffection with senior management decisions. There was insufficient evidence to bring misconduct proceedings against any individuals.

(32) **Has disciplinary action been taken against any member of staff (whether civilian or uniformed) for leaking information to the media during the last 5 years? If so, please identify the number of cases and their outcome. There is no need to identify the person or persons the subject of the disciplinary process.**

No disciplinary action has been taken against any officer or member of staff for leaking information within the last five years.

(33) **What payments (if any) are considered to be legitimate financial transactions between Suffolk Constabulary personnel and the media?**

There are no payments between individual officers or staff from the Constabulary and the media that I consider legitimate transactions.

All legitimate financial transactions are made on behalf of our organisation and are correctly recorded as part of our financial recording systems. In the past year legitimate transactions with the media have included the purchasing of advertising space and payment for hosting the Force in-house magazine on-line.

It is conceivable that members of the media could be registered as Covert Human Intelligence Sources and receive legitimate financial payments. There have been no such incidents in Suffolk.

(34) **What policies and/or guidance are in place in relation to financial transactions between Suffolk Constabulary personnel and the media.**

We have no specific policies or guidance in relation to financial transactions between Constabulary personnel and the media.

Financial transactions are covered by financial regulations and finance procedural notes. The purchasing of goods and services are subject to procurement rules. These apply to all circumstances not specifically to transactions with the media.

**(35) To what extent do you believe bribery of personnel by the media to be a current problem for Suffolk Constabulary (if at all)?**

There is no intelligence to suggest that bribery of officers or staff by the media is an issue in Suffolk at present.

The most recent investigation into leaks to the media indicates they were most likely motivated by disaffection arising from planned organisational changes.

That said I am alert to the issue and by no means complacent always recognising the potential threat.

**(36) What steps are taken: (a) to educate your personnel about bribery; (b) otherwise to prevent the bribery of your personnel; (c) pro-actively to detect bribery; (d) retrospectively to investigate bribery; and (e) to discipline personnel (if any) who are found to have accepted bribes from the media?**

(a)

As referred to in my answer to Question 28 new officers and staff receive initial training in respect of the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act. The Professional Standards Department also delivers inputs regarding the expected standards of professional behaviour.

(b)

Additional training has been developed that incorporates the dangers and organisational concerns relating to social networking. This has been delivered to Student Officers and newly appointed Special Constables and Police Community Support Officers. This training includes the potential dangers and threats of identity theft, blackmail and bribery.

(c)

The ACIU in liaison with the Vetting Unit monitor all officers and staff with known financial issues as this is a recognised trigger for increased vulnerability to corruption. All officers and staff experiencing financial difficulties are risk assessed by the Vetting Unit. They are encouraged to disclose significant debts so that appropriate support can be provided. In some cases the risk assessment can result in temporary redeployment and/or loss of access to police systems.

The ACIU is well placed to investigate any allegations of bribery. They have the technical capability and established intelligence systems. They have the ability to monitor the computer use of officers and staff suspected to be vulnerable to corrupt approaches.

(d)

Allegations of bribery would be investigated to both criminal and misconduct standards. An appropriate Senior Investigating Officer would be appointed drawing upon other resources as required. Allegations of bribery would be referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

(e)

The Constabulary has not recently investigated any allegations of bribery.

**(37) Does Suffolk Constabulary have a press office? What role does it fulfil? If you do have such an office, what is the media's attitude towards the press office? In particular, are they satisfied by the provision of information and the routing of communications through your press office or do they prefer direct contact with individual personnel within the Suffolk Constabulary?**

Suffolk Constabulary operates a Headquarters based press office staffed by Corporate News Officers to manage contacts from the media be they by telephone, email or online (via the Online Media Centre). In addition, Local News Officers, based at key locations around the county, also have responsibilities for media liaison as well as more proactive work. Generally, the system works well and our Corporate Communications staff have fostered professional, productive relationships with all elements of the media. In general the media appears to be satisfied with the provision of information routed through the press office that will willingly make officers and staff available for interview and comment when appropriate.



On a small number of occasions during the past year, Chief Officer colleagues and I have had representations from daily newspaper editors who had felt that the Constabulary had been tardy in the release of some information. Each of these instances has been fully examined and explanations provided and on occasions justifiable criticisms accepted and apologies offered. I have sought to use these instances as opportunities to learn and improve with advice and guidance being offered to individuals where appropriate and procedural changes being implemented where needed. I am optimistic that our developing force media strategy, which sees us publishing news and information 'as it happens' via our newly procured website and social media, will significantly reduce such concerns in future.

When an issue of significant concern regarding our service arises the local editors feel able to telephone or email me or one of my Chief Officer colleagues. This is part of a healthy relationship that enables us to deal openly and frankly with issues as they arise.

**(38) What limitations, if any, are there on staff from Suffolk Constabulary leaving to work for the media and vice versa.**

There are no limitations on staff leaving the Constabulary to work for the media or vice versa.

**(39) Are records kept of those who join Suffolk Constabulary from the media, or go on to work for the media after leaving Suffolk Constabulary? If so, please describe the system in place.**

There are no special or specific records kept of staff who join the Constabulary from the media or who join the media upon leaving the Constabulary.

Our standard application form requires details of previous employers from which it might be possible to identify people who have previously worked in the media. It is our normal practice to request references from previous employers for the last five years in respect of applicants for police officer and police staff posts. This might identify individuals who have previously worked in the media although the primary purpose of seeking references is to identify patterns of behaviour in previous employment to inform our decision as to whether or not a person is suitable for our organisation.

It is worth mentioning that posts within the Corporate Communications Department are regarded as politically restricted thereby placing restrictions on the individual's private life.

- (40) To the best of your knowledge are there any discernible patterns in the movement of personnel from the media into Suffolk Constabulary and vice versa?

I am not aware of any discernible pattern.

- (41) What levels of awareness and experience are there in Suffolk Constabulary of "media crimes" and in particular: (a) unlawful interception of communications (including the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act); (b) bribery of officials by the media; (c) blackmail; (d) harassment by paparazzi and journalists; (e) traffic and/or public order offences committed by photographers and journalists pursuing stories; (f) inciting officials to communicate confidential information held by Suffolk Police/ conspiring with them to obtain such information; and (g) crime within media organisations other than the foregoing (e.g. dishonest expense claims).

Suffolk Constabulary does not have any experience of investigating 'media crimes' of the type detailed in (a) to (g) above. During my tenure as Chief Constable there have been no reported offences or proactive investigations into these categories of crime.

- (42) What sort of priority is given to, and what level of resources are available to deal with, the above.

It is not possible to generalise regarding the priority given to 'media crimes' and the resources available. Each report would be assessed on its merits and an appropriate investigating officer appointed who would draw upon the breadth of policing resources as required. The Force has a 'tasking and co-ordinating' process that prioritises investigations and the allocation of resources in the face of competing demands.

- (43) What is your current impression of the culture within Suffolk Constabulary in relation to its dealings with the press.

Culturally Suffolk Constabulary has a clear set of organisational values that are lived out in the day-to-day delivery of policing in the county. The Force has a strong community focus

and generally enjoys excellent support from the public. In comparative terms it is a relatively safe county where our most recent public survey showed that 93% of people felt safe in the area where they live.

The Force has a shared Corporate Communications Department with Norfolk Constabulary. This collaborative approach went live in July 2011 and meant significant changes for all staff involved. The change saw a significant reduction in the number of posts within the Department and the need to take on new working practices to deliver a good service with fewer resources. This modernisation has seen the adoption of best practice maximising the use of new technology. We are six months into the changes and already a competent, cohesive and professional department is emerging to support both Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies.

Working with the national media is not a regular feature of our day-to-day working. As a result when a high profile event of national interest occurs there is a heavy reliance upon the Corporate Communications Department to support and advise officers and staff.

We have a very strong and generally supportive relationship with all aspects of our local media. This stems from the fact that we are all rooted in the local communities that we serve. We also share many similar objectives in terms of wanting to promote Suffolk as a vibrant, thriving and above all safe county.

I support an open and transparent approach with the media and encourage officers and staff at all levels to promote the good work that they are doing. There are numerous examples on a daily basis of officers and staff who are comfortable and able to do this. An examination of the daily press cuttings, local media websites and local news on radio and television will reveal officers and staff responding confidently to the media.

There are those individuals who are less at ease in dealing with the media. In these cases I have seen individuals err on the side of caution and withhold information that should have been released. This has often been done with good motive or through lack of confidence but has unintentionally served to undermine media relations.

Our organisation is one that is willing to examine itself, consider justifiable and well founded criticism and where appropriate learn lessons. This open and frank approach to complaints or issues that have not been handled well has strengthened our relationship with the local media and underpins our professional relationship.

My overall aim is building trust and confidence in the Constabulary and the way we police local communities and this underpins the approach our organisation takes to media relations. I am confident that most officers and staff in the organisation are confident to work professionally with the media to achieve this aim.

**(44) Do you consider that there are further steps which could and/or should be taken to ensure that relationships between the police and the media are and remain appropriate?**

In my role of Chief Constable in Suffolk I have not experienced any significant issues arising from corrupt or improper relationships between my officers and staff and members of the media.

I believe there is no room for complacency and that we must continue to create an environment in which positive and appropriate relationships can flourish whilst inappropriate relationships and corrupt practice can be quickly identified and dealt with. I believe key components to achieving this include:

- Clearly articulated organisational values
- Strong leadership
- Good training
- A practical and pragmatic policy framework
- Proportionate monitoring to ensure organisational behaviours are appropriate
- A willingness to learn and improve when things go wrong

I anticipate the next set of improvements in my organisation will emerge from our self-assessment and action plan utilising the HMIC checklist from the 'Without Fear or Favour – a review of police relationships' report. I am anxious to ensure that this is achieved in a balanced way that does not unnecessarily create bureaucracy or inhibit the vast majority of our professional and hard working officers and staff who enjoy appropriate and productive media relations to the benefit of the communities we serve.

**Additional Issue – Freedom of Information Requests**

A significant issue for Suffolk Constabulary in its relationship with the media is the increasing demand for information under the Freedom of Information Act. The table below illustrates

this increasing trend over recent years. As police resources are decreasing demand in this area of our business is increasing and adding pressure on already stretched resources.

The media is the single largest source of the requests for information. An examination of the 290 media requests for information received during 2011 show that 95 were from the local media and 195 from the national media.

This is an area of the relationship between the police and the media that might merit closer examination.

Year	Total Requests	Requests From Media
2007	350	174
2008	469	218
2009	604	298
2010	546	229
2011	657	290

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed.....

Date:...27 / 01 / 12.....

Simon Ash  
Chief Constable of Suffolk Constabulary