REGULATION 43 REPORT:

NOTIFICATION OF OUTCOME OF MISCONDUCT HEARING

POLICE CONSTABLE 22498 WILLIAM FARMER

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 28 September 2026 a misconduct hearing was convened to deal with allegations against Police Constable (PC) William Farmer which the Appropriate Authority (AA) assessed as amounting to gross misconduct.

1.2 The hearing was held in accordance with the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020 (PCR 2020) as amended by Police (Conduct) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.

1.3 The hearing was held at the offices of West Mercia Police Federation in Droitwich. The hearing was audio recorded and was concluded on the same day.

1.4 The hearing Panel consisted of Assistant Chief Officer Rachel Hartland-Lane, and two Independent Panel Members (IPM), Mrs Jenni Ord and Miss Devika Assi.

1.5 The Panel were supported throughout the hearing by Mr Callum Cowx, the appointed independent legal adviser or Legally Qualified Person (LQP).

1.6 The AA was represented by Mr Mark Thomas of counsel. The officer was represented by Mr John Greaney of counsel.

1.7 Prior to the hearing the Panel was provided with a bundle of documents relevant to the case.

2. THE ALLEGATIONS

2.1 The breaches of the Standards of Professional Behaviour (SPB) alleged were set out in a Regulation 30 (PCR 2020) Notice of Allegations as follows:

Allegations

1. *You engaged in a course of conduct with regards to a female member of the public that was inappropriate.*

Particulars

a. *On an afternoon in or around November or December 2024 you attended the Spar store in Marlpool Lane, Franche, Kidderminster .*

b. *You were in police uniform.*

c. *You were served at the till by a member of the public, 'Ms X'.*

d. *You approached the till and, whilst buying some Quality Street chocolates, said words to the effect that you "had annoyed people and work and needed to win them over".*

e. *During the course of that exchange, you asked 'Ms X' if she had Instagram. You took out your phone, accessed Instagram and passed the phone to 'Ms X' thereby requesting she provide her details.*

f. *You said words to the effect of "I shouldn't be doing this in uniform but I couldn't resist".*

g. *'Ms X' typed in her Instagram username but did not "add" herself to your account. She handed the phone back to you and you pressed the request button before putting the phone back into your trouser pocket.*

h. *You then left the premises.*

i. *'Ms X' did not accept your Instagram friend request.*

j. *'Ms X' subsequently confirmed in a witness statement that she had no intention of accepting your follow request, but just wanted to "get out of the situation". 'Ms X' noted that you were "a policeman in full uniform" and she "didn't want to put up resistance".*

k. *That evening – having not had your initial Instagram friend request accepted*

- you sent a request to add 'Ms X' on Snapchat, a second social media app.

l. *[Withdrawn]*

2. *Your actions individually and collectively were inappropriate and a breach of the standards of professional behaviour.*

3. *You knew, or ought to have known, that your conduct was otherwise in breach of the standards of professional behaviour.*

4. *Your actions as set out above constituted a serious departure from one or more*

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of the following standards such that dismissal could be justified (and therefore amounted to gross misconduct):

(a) ***Authority, Respect and Courtesy***

Police officers act with self-control and tolerance, treating members of the public and colleagues with respect and courtesy.
Police officers do not abuse their powers or authority and respect the rights of all individuals.

(b) ***Discreditable Conduct***

Police officers behave in a manner which does not discredit the police service or undermine public confidence in it, whether on or off duty.

3. THE OFFICER'S RESPONSE

3.1 The officer was interviewed under caution and answered questions that were put to him about the alleged events. After being served with the Regulation 30 Notice containing the allegations, he served a formal written response to that notice as required by Regulation 31 of the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020.

3.2 PC Farmer admitted all of facts as alleged save that he denied saying "*in uniform*" as stated in paragraph 1f of the Regulation 30 Notice.

3.3 Having admitted almost all of the factual allegations PC Farmer accepted that he was wrong in asking to initiate social media contact with 'Ms X'. He said he intended no harm and that this was an error of judgement which would not be repeated.

3.4 PC Farmer did not accept that if his conduct breached any of the SPB that such breaches were so serious as to amount to misconduct.

4. THE EVIDENCE

4.1 The Panel took into account the evidence in the bundle, particularly that to which it was referred by counsel.

4.2 Oral evidence was given by PC Farmer. He is 23 years of age and has been a police officer for about 3½ years. This means he was 20 years of age and had about 6-months police service at the time of the incident in question.

4.3 He said that he regularly went into the Spar shop in which 'Ms X' worked to buy beverages and snacks. On the occasion in question, he was on duty and went into the shop alone to buy some sweets for his colleagues. On selecting his items, he went to the till counter which was being tended by 'Ms X'. He said they had a brief conversation, and he asked her for her Instagram details. 'Ms X' held out her hand as a gesture for PC Farmer's mobile phone. He handed her his phone into which she added her Instagram username. PC Farmer then sent her a contact request which he said took only a single tap on the screen of his phone.

4.4 Later that night when PC Farmer noted that 'Ms X' had not accepted his Instagram contact request, he sent her a similar request on Snapchat. He explained to the Panel that no effort or research was required to obtain 'Ms X''s Snapchat address as this was listed on her Instagram profile which she had already provided to him when she gave him her Instagram username.

4.5 When 'Ms X' did not respond to his Instagram and Snapchat requests, he took no further action. He said he went out of his way not to have any further contact with her. He continued buying goods from the Spar shop and when 'Ms X' was working in the shop, he actively avoided her.

4.6 PC Farmer accepted that on reflection his actions could bring discredit on the police but that he has learned from this episode and understands the importance of keeping his social and professional lives separate.

4.7 The Regulation 30 Notice asserted that this incident occurred in or around November or December 2024. Evidence from 'Ms X''s Instagram account showed that it in fact occurred on 24 September 2026.

4.8 'Ms X' did not provide her witness statement to the police until 25 June 2025. The Panel asked for clarification as who reported the incident as the information provided suggested that it was an anonymous complaint. The counsel for the AA during proceedings stated that it was 'Ms X'. The AA explained that it was not 'Ms X' who reported the matter to West Mercia Police as a concern. The Panel was told that 'Ms X' mentioned her interaction with PC Farmer to another police officer and that officer then made an anonymous complaint to the force.

4.9 In her statement 'Ms X' said that she was not really bothered by PC Farmer's requests although she was bothered by the fact he was in uniform. She said a couple of other members of staff thought it was a bit weird.

4.10 'Ms X' said that after receiving his social media requests and before the matter was reported to West Mercia Police she had seen PC Farmer in the store but that he had ignored her, kept his head down and used the self-checkout tills.

5 FINDINGS

5.1 Before beginning its deliberations, counsel for the AA and for the officer made closing submissions. These need not be repeated here as they were captured on the audio recording but were carefully considered by the Panel.

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5.2 The Panel also received legal advice from the LQP on how it must approach its task. The Panel had regard to the legal advice when deliberating on the allegations and adopted the following staged approach when doing so.

Factual Findings (Stage 1)

5.3 The Panel considered all of the evidence presented to it in the round and made the following findings in regard to the factual allegations as particularised in the Regulation 30 Notice.

5.4 The Panel was not satisfied the AA had discharged its burden of proving that PC Farmer included the words "*in uniform*" as part of his remark to 'Ms X' as set out at Allegation 1f. The officer denied using those words whilst accepting every other factual allegation made against him. He was unshaken and convincing on this point, and the Panel heard no oral evidence from 'Ms X' to contradict the officer. The Panel did not place significant weight on this fine point of evidential detail as it was not disputed that PC Farmer was in uniform and on duty and that he should not have behaved in the way he did when in uniform.

5.5 The Panel found the incident occurred on 24 September 2024 as recorded in the Snapchat data provided.

5.6 All other factual elements of the allegations were found proved on the basis that PC Farmer admitted them.

The SPB (Stage 2)

5.7 The Panel went on to determine whether the proven factual allegations amounted to breaches of the SPB.

5.8 The Panel considered whether or not the proven facts amounted to a breach of Authority, Respect and Courtesy and found they did not. PC Farmer's behaviour did not amount to a lack of respect for 'Ms X' or a lack of courtesy towards her. The Panel recognised the potential for PC Farmer's conduct to be seen as a misuse of his position as a police officer, by in some way putting 'Ms X' under pressure to accept his social media request. But the Panel found this was not the case in reality. This was a young man of only 20 years of age, who was new to the police service and part of a generation which relies heavily on social media. His was a momentary and isolated error of judgement whereby he failed to separate his social life from his professional life, but it could not be said that he abused his position of authority.

5.9 The Panel was satisfied that PC Farmer's conduct had the potential to bring discredit on himself and the Police Service because it created a risk or perception that 'Ms X' was under pressure to provide her Instagram details to PC Farmer because he was a police officer on duty. Therefore, his conduct amounted to Discreditable Conduct.

Misconduct, Gross Misconduct or Neither (Stage 3)

5.10 The Panel moved to the final stage of the process to determine whether the breach of the Conduct SPB was so serious as to amount to misconduct or gross misconduct.

5.11 The Panel first considered whether the breach was so serious as to justify disciplinary action. It found that on the facts of this case the proportionate response was for PC Farmer to have undergone the reflective practice process. The facts were not so serious as to justify formal disciplinary action for the following reasons.

5.12 When viewed objectively PC Farmer was a young man of only 20 years of age who belongs to a generation which relies heavily on social media for its interactions with others. At the time he can only have been a police officer for about 6-months. He should have had enough training and education by that time to know that one must not mix one's professional life with one's personal life, but on this occasion, he forgot that important rule. However, the Panel put this down to immaturity and bad judgement. The Panel also found that this was an isolated and momentary lack of judgement on the officer's part. No doubt there was some element of attraction to 'Ms X', but no malign intent on the officer's part was revealed. In this regard, it was relevant that the officer did not persist in trying to contact 'Ms X' after she ignored his Snapchat request and the officer continued shopping in the Spar shop yet actively avoided any further contact with her.

5.13 No harm was caused to 'Ms X'. She was not really bothered by PC Farmer's actions, and her colleagues regarded it as "a bit weird" but did not advise her to report the matter. 'Ms X' was not so unsettled by it that she felt she needed to make a report to police, and it only came to light when another police officer learned of it and felt it should be investigated.

5.14 The Panel also considered the potential for reputational harm. It decided that reputational harm to the Police Service and to West Mercia Police would be negligible. The Panel considered what the well informed, reasonable member of the public would make of PC Farmer's behaviour and concluded that whilst such a rational and objective person might disapprove, they would recognise that this was a momentary error of judgement and an act of immaturity by a student police officer, with no nefarious motive and who genuinely understands and acknowledges his wrongdoing. The Panel accepted that PC Farmer has learned from this incident and poses no threat to women and girls. On the facts of this case a finding of misconduct and a disciplinary sanction are not required to maintain trust and confidence in the police.

5.15 The Panel was provided with evidence of the officer's previous good character. This included a number of positive character statements from other police officers who had been aware of the nature of the allegations faced by PC Farmer. Although it took PC Farmer's good character into account, it played no part in the Panel's decision at Stage 2 which was made solely on its assessment of the seriousness of the breach of the Conduct SPB.

5.16 The Panel decided that the breach of the SPB in this case did not cross the misconduct threshold. It also decided that the officer would benefit from completing

the reflective practice process to reinforce his understanding of the standards the public and his force expect of him.

Assistant Chief Officer Rachel Hartland-Lane - Chair
Mrs Jenni Ord - IPM
Miss Devika Assi - IPM.

30th September 2026

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