From:	Chief Constable Richard Cooper
Ref:	Constable Talbot Talbot…….
Our Ref No:	……..
Date:	25 September 2026

FINDINGS and OUTCOME FORM

ACCELERATED MISCONDUCT HEARING – PC Lee Talbot

25 September 2026: Hindlip Hall, Hindlip Headquarters

In accordance with Regulation 63 of the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020 (as amended), below listed are the findings and any disciplinary action imposed in the above case. This document must be supplied to PC Talbot before the end of 5 working days beginning with the first working day after the conclusion of the misconduct proceedings.

Hearing members:

Chair: Chief Constable Richard Cooper

Details of the conduct alleged to have breached the Standards of Professional Behaviour:

It is alleged that your behaviour has fallen below the Standards of Professional Behaviour in that:

On 24th November 2025, after being informed that you were about to be arrested for coercive and controlling behaviour, and knowing that police would seek to seize your mobile telephone to secure evidence for a criminal investigation into your conduct:

(a) You reset your mobile telephone to its factory settings, thus deleting and / or concealing all evidence stored on the device;
(b) You gave your mobile telephone to your father, with the result that the device would not be on your person at the time of your arrest; and
(c) You asked your father not to give your mobile telephone to police without your consent.

By your conduct as set out above:

You failed to be honest and to act with integrity. Further or alternatively, you failed to fulfil your responsibility to give appropriate cooperation during investigations, inquiries and formal proceedings, participating openly and professionally in line with the expectations of a police officer when identified as a witness.

Further or alternatively, you behaved in a manner that discredits the police service or undermines public confidence in it, whether on or off duty. Your behaviour therefore amounts to breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour pertaining, respectively, to:

Honesty and Integrity; Duties and Responsibilities; and Discreditable Conduct.

Findings of Fact

PC Talbot has accepted that he reset his phone to its factory settings having been informed that he was going to be arrested. He has accepted that this factory reset was prompted by him becoming aware that he was to be arrested.

He further accepts that having been called by the Detective Sergeant and having conducted the factory reset, he contacted his father and handed the phone to him. During the provision of evidence during the hearing, he was less clear that he had told his father not to hand the phone to the police without his permission but did not deny having said this. Having reviewed the bodyworn video from the two officers who attended his parents' address, I am wholly satisfied from their words and actions that they had been asked by PC Talbot not to hand the phone over without his prior authorisation.

PC Talbot has acknowledged his belief that his phone would have been seized by officers upon his arrest in order to look for evidence. He has undertaken that same activity himself on a number of occasions.

The allegations set out at a), b), and c) are therefore proven, as is the motivation of those actions being to prevent the phone being seized by officers who were investigating an offence.

The breaches of the standards of professional behaviour as set out in the Regulation 51 notice do not ascribe motivations for PC Talbot's actions. Within his second interview and within his Regulation 54 response he provided the explanation that he did so not to frustrate the investigation, but because of explicit images of a personal nature that were present on his device.

PC Talbot is not accused of any breaches of the standards of professional behaviour for the matters that led to his arrest. I have considered the allegations that led to his arrest only in as much as they are relevant to the matters that I am considering. Within his Regulation 54 response PC Talbot states that his deletion of items on the phone was not to conceal relevant evidence. If the totality of the evidence had supported him having been involved in controlling and coercive behaviour of his partner, then this may have led to greater weight being placed on there having been incriminating evidence of such behaviour on his phone.

In reality however, his partner's retraction of the allegations made against him is fulsome and total. When interviewed by Professional Standards officers, PC Talbot produced as part of his prepared statement a screenshot of messages from his partner to him that include abusive terminology. He cited these as evidence that it was him that was the victim of controlling behaviour from her. This is repeated in his Regulation 54 response.

I have also explored the explanation that PC Talbot has advanced, that he took steps to prevent the seizure and examination of the phone because of a fear that private

and sexual images of him and his partner would be seen by officers who he knew personally. In his Regulation 54 response, PC Talbot states that on return of the phone to him, he was able to restore the material contained on it by recovering data stored on the Cloud. The screenshots of messages he produced in his prepared statement appear to have been recovered by this method, which might have prompted further enquiries by investigators, but did not.

During the hearing PC Talbot was requested to consent to demonstrating that private and sexual images as described were present on his phone. The hearing was adjourned to enable this, with only the Chair having sight of the material. PC Talbot did demonstrate that there some images as described on his device, which were date stamped from before his arrest. They were not all examined, but overwhelmingly these images related to PC Talbot's partner rather than himself.

PC Talbot was asked as part of his PSD interview and within the hearing why he had not simply deleted the photographs prior to his arrest. In his PSD interview he answered, 'no comment', whilst in the hearing he was not definitive but indicated that he did not wish to lose the photos. This is inconsistent with a belief that all the material on the phone was recoverable.

PC Talbot was also questioned within the hearing as to his experience of what happens when a device is seized as part of an investigation. His view was that a device was normally secured for examination but there had been occasions when an officer had gone into it prior to this to look at its contents. PC Talbot acknowledged that he did not know the sergeant who had called him and advised him that he was going to be arrested. It is normal and well-known practice when officers are under investigation for colleagues who are not known to them to conduct enquiries and interviews. I consider it more likely than not that PC Talbot would have known this. Based on his experience of policing, there is very little rational basis for him believing that someone who knew him would have access to his phone and examine the contents.

The opportunity to establish the full content of material on PC Talbot's device was lost because of two things. Firstly, the factory reset he conducted that made examination more difficult. Secondly, the decision by investigators of the original allegation not to seek a more detailed examination beyond a kiosk download. In conclusion, I am unable to form a view that is more than speculative as to the underlying reason for PC Talbot's actions to prevent the phone being seized and examined by officers.

Seriousness

I have considered the 2023 College of Policing Guidance on Outcomes in Police Misconduct Proceedings and the Home Office Guidance concerning Conduct, Efficiency and Effectiveness. The College guidance outlines a general framework for assessing the seriousness of the conduct but permits me to consider factors that I consider relevant. I have adopted the three-stage process to assist my decision making. The first of those three stages is assessing the seriousness of the proven conduct with reference to culpability, the harm caused, and any aggravating and mitigating factors.

Harm

As outlined above, it does not appear that the investigation was terminally undermined by PC Talbot's actions as it seems more likely than not that the material on the phone could have been retrieved. I base this on the messages that were provided as part of PC Talbot's prepared statement for the PSD interview and the fact that images as described by PC Talbot are now present on his phone and are date-stamped. That is no conclusive evidence they were there at the time of his arrest, but it is indicative of such. Therefore, the investigation was hindered but I cannot say that evidence was irretrievably lost.

There is the broader question of harm to public confidence and to the integrity of policing. Police officers seek to secure evidence on a daily basis, often interfering with the rights of the public by utilising powers to seize their property. As well as the lawful basis for such actions, policing relies on the principles of legitimacy and policing by consent. There is inevitable harm caused by a police officer taking deliberate action to impede the investigation of an offence, and to circumvent colleagues utilising their powers to investigate.

Culpability

PC Talbot is the only person responsible here. He was alone at the time of being informed of his arrest and was not subject to any external influence.

The level of culpability is intertwined with the question of intent. I have determined that his actions were intentional in as much as they were intended to hinder the seizure of his device and recovery of material from it, but not the specific intent related to either concealing relevant information or preventing embarrassment.

This is not strictly a matter of operational dishonesty. PC Talbot was at the relevant time being treated as a suspect under investigation rather than an officer conducting operational duties. It is clearly however a breach of the standard of honesty and integrity within an operational setting – something that is of fundamental importance to our profession.

Paragraph 4.28 of College Guidance states that "Impropriety involving corruption, deliberately misleading or compromising an investigation, or wilfully failing to give proper disclosure in a criminal prosecution is likely to be comparably serious to, and/or to involve, operational dishonesty." In this case PC Talbot has, by his deliberate actions, compromised an investigation. He did not explain whilst being interviewed that he had conducted a factory reset of his device. He did not take steps to ensure material could be recovered. This goes much beyond not answering investigators' questions, as any suspect is entitled to do. He has actively hindered the progress of a criminal investigation. As such, this is off duty dishonesty but is closely aligned in its nature and seriousness to operational dishonesty.

The College Guidance confirms at paragraph 4.32 "some off-duty dishonesty may be very serious, particularly where it carries implications for the officer's ability to carry out their professional duties or has the potential to bring the police service into disrepute."

I have paid particular attention to the Court of Appeal judgment in *Salter v Chief Constable of Dorset Police [2012] EWCA Civ 1047*. The cases are not identical but similar principles are at play. In *Salter* the officer took deliberate actions to interfere

with evidence, but with an underlying motivation that was not of itself malevolent. Nonetheless, the Court of Appeal found that:

"Honesty and integrity in the conduct of police officers in any investigation are fundamental to the proper workings of the criminal justice system. …the public should be able unquestionably to accept the honesty and integrity of a police officer. The damage done by a lack of integrity in connection with the investigation of an alleged offence may be enormous."

As I have acknowledged, PC Talbot's case may not fall under the strictest definition of operational dishonesty. He has though acted dishonestly and without integrity within the context of a live criminal investigation, for the purposes of preventing investigators from securing evidence that they considered relevant. This escalates the level of culpability that I ascribe to him.

Aggravation

PC Talbot has taken deliberate steps to ensure phone was not submitted for examination. That deliberate element, consolidated through giving his phone to his father, is a matter of some aggravation, but I have accounted for that element when assessing culpability, so I am careful not to assign significant aggravating weight to it.

PC Talbot did not take the opportunity presented to him, when interviewed in relation to the initial allegations, to acknowledge the actions he had taken to delete the contents of the phone.

Mitigation

I have considered by way of mitigation that PC Talbot undertook these actions in the immediate aftermath of [redacted]

His actions also arose from him unexpectedly discovering that he was to be arrested. This was not a case where an officer has gone out of their way to create an opportunity to misconduct themselves.

I have weighed the factors above and, having done so, consider that the conduct amounts to gross misconduct. The primary reason for this, even without clarity regarding the underlying motivation, is that PC Talbot deliberately took active and varied steps to hinder the seizure and examination of his mobile phone when he knew that investigators would wish to seize and examine it in pursuit of a criminal enquiry.

Exceptional Circumstances

I have considered the Regulation 62(1)(a) implications that the starting point is dismissal where gross misconduct is found unless under Regulation 62(1)(b) exceptional circumstances apply.

In making this judgment I have considered the officer's personal record and the mitigation offered. The officer has no history of misconduct. He does not rely on any positive testimony regarding his character.
I note the circumstances he found himself in at the time of being told that he would be arrested.

Ultimately, I do not find there to be exceptional circumstances in this case. Integrity within the operational environment is fundamental and non-negotiable to the profession of policing.

I have paid attention to the threefold purposes of the misconduct regime. It exists for the following reasons:

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

The combination of the dishonesty and the need for standards of behaviour in relation to the integrity of evidence mean this is particularly serious. I believe that for the maintenance of public confidence and to uphold high standards that dismissal is necessary and that no exceptional circumstances exist that lead to me to deviate from that path.

The outcome is therefore that PC Talbot will be dismissed without notice. He will be included on the barred list held by the College of Policing.

I confirm that the above is correctly recorded. I also confirm that the officer's personal record was considered before a decision was reached on any disciplinary action to be imposed.

Signed: … ……. Date: 1st October 2026

Chief Constable Richard Cooper

If you wish to receive a copy of the record of the proceedings, please contact the Professional Standards Department.

You have a right of appeal against the finding. Should you wish to exercise this right you must do so in writing to the Chairman of the Police Appeals Tribunal within ten days of this notice. Please note that the tribunal can increase any outcome imposed as well as reduce or overturn the decision of the panel. You have the right to be legally represented at the appeal hearing.

Form of receipt to be completed by officer subject of proceedings:

I acknowledge receipt of this written notice of the misconduct proceedings, dated ……2026 of which this is a true copy.

Signed……. Date……