memorandum

From	ACO Rachel Hartland Lane, Director of Business Services
To	Former Officer Paul Buffrey
Our Ref	CM/0123/25
Date	2nd October 2026

FINDINGS and OUTCOME FORM

ACCELERATED MISCONDUCT HEARING – former Officer 628 Paul Buffrey
2nd October 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 you before the end of 5 working days beginning with the first working day after the conclusion of the misconduct proceedings.

Hearing members:

Chair. ACO Rachel Hartland Lane
Appropriate Authority Representative: DS Alex Pullen, Professional Standards
Hearings Officer – Lewis Cleaves

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

It is alleged that whilst on duty former PS Buffery displayed inappropriate, unprofessional and derogatory speech, attitudes and behaviours. This included the use of sexualised, offensive and discriminatory comments regarding both members of the public and police colleagues.

The Breaches of the Standards of Professional Behaviour alleged are as follows:

- Authority, Respect and Courtesy
- Equality and Diversity
- Discreditable conduct

The behaviour described does not meet the standards of professional behaviour as set out in the schedule to the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020

In accordance with Regulation 61, the person conducting the accelerated misconduct hearing shall review the facts of the case and decide on the balance of probabilities whether the conduct of the officer amounts to misconduct, gross misconduct or neither.

Findings:

I recognise that former officer Buffrey had 18 years of policing experience He held the rank of Sergeant with aspirations for the rank of Inspector. He has undertaken acting Inspector duties in his career and so it is clear that he was well thought of and was a capable officer. [redacted] Whilst this does not excuse the behaviour, it provides some level of mitigation in respect of his behaviour.

It is understood that the behaviours were brought to the attention of PSD which led ACU investigators to obtain a series of audio recordings. The fact that these matters were brought to the attention of PSD suggests that these behaviours were not wholly acceptable to those that worked with him. Whilst former officer Buffrey believed he was holding private conversations with 'friends', and that he would not behave in that way in public, there are significant concerns regarding the manner in which he talks to and about others. Former officer Buffrey denies that he created a negative culture in his team and stated that he felt that he created an environment where he could be challenged, however the fact that he didn't come under direct challenge is not an indicator that he has created a safe environment. The complaint to PSD of the sustained nature and frequency of behaviour was proven when the audio recordings were obtained Given the relatively short timeframe of these recordings, there were numerous examples of the former officers behaviour falling short of the conduct expected of an officer and indeed a supervisor.

Former officer Buffrey demonstrated these poor behaviours whilst on duty and in the presence of a number of police colleagues, including those who worked directly for him. Many of those that were engaged in these conversations were young in service and in training. As a supervisor, Buffrey holds the responsibility of setting the standard to his team and those around him. He is the greatest influencer of behaviour in his team, yet he chose to disregard the standards of professional behaviour In citing that he felt he was amongst 'friends' also gives cause for concern. He has a role of leading and managing his teams positively, whilst he will build friendships, there must be a professional line between friendship and management.

Former officer Buffrey accepted that his conduct was discreditable in today's policing environment He has raised that the police service has changed, however he has failed to adapt, he was unable to adapt and unwilling to change who he was. Using humour is acceptable when working in a team. Using humour at the detriment of others is not Using humour to make others feel uncomfortable is not If former officer Buffrey is unable to adapt and change, then it is not inconceivable to believe that colleagues wouldn't challenge him for fear that nothing will change Being a supervisor, is also about being self-aware, demonstrating your support for others and being constructive rather than critical in your feedback or views of others The environment created was not the professional environment that an ordinary member of the public would wish to see and is not in line with our code of ethics.

Former officer Buffrey accepted that his comments were unacceptable in respect of equality and diversity, [redacted] Former officer Buffrey was on duty, managing a team of individuals who are likely from different social circles and he did not consider the impact his comments could potentially have on others

In his role as Sergeant and holding a position of power and influence, he accepted that in relation to authority, respect and courtesy, his behaviour could be viewed as inappropriate and that he could have adapted his approach. He felt that his team were, however, happy and responded well to his management style. It is conceivable that some members of his team did respond well to him, however if you consistently hear your supervisor talk derogatively about others, then it is likely that you will fear challenging such behaviour as you could become the subject of such comments yourself Former officer Buffrey should be setting an example to others and creating a positive working environment.

I am satisfied that the conduct amounts to Gross Misconduct

Disciplinary action to be imposed:

In determining the appropriate outcome in this case, I have had specific regard to the College of Policing Guidance on Outcomes in Police Misconduct Proceedings.

Assessing the seriousness of the conduct lies at the heart of the decision on outcome. I have taken the three-stage approach as set out in the guidance at paragraph 4.2 in 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.

Former officer Buffrey was in a position of responsibility and arguably the most influential as first line supervisor He has demonstrated consistently that his behaviour falls short of what is expected as a Sergeant and as a police officer. Whilst the behaviour was demonstrated 'in private', it was often in front of other officers, most of whom were young in service and impressionable He was in a position of trust and others would be looking for him to demonstrate the behaviours that the code of ethics dictates His behaviour did not accord with the standards we request of our officers and staff. Whilst former officer Buffrey believes he created a positive working environment and his team liked working for him, it is likely that some found the environment to be unprofessional and would not be inclined to challenge the behaviour of their supervisor, particularly those who are young in service and inexperienced.

Former officer Buffrey used discriminatory language in reference to members of the public and officers. Whilst he stated that this was done as a joke, there is sufficient training and guidance for officers and staff about what is acceptable and what isn't. He ought to have known better in his position of rank and with his 18 years of experience. The fact that former officer Buffrey's behaviour was sustained is also a key factor.

I therefore find that there is high culpability

In respect of the harm caused, the fact that there was an investigation as a consequence of a complaint to PSD, would suggest that former officer Buffrey's behaviour was of concern The investigation found numerous examples of poor behaviour and whilst there are not specific complaints from those he spoke to or about, the potential harm this could cause could be significant. Should an ordinary member of the public view these comments, it would have a significant impact on public confidence. Harm doesn't need to be suffered by a defined individual or group to undermine public confidence Where an officer commits an act that would harm public confidence if it were known to the public, this must be taken into account. The force, for many years, have reinforced the importance of creating a safe and professional culture This behaviour has damaged the organisational culture.

There are mitigating factors that I have considered [redacted] In addition he felt he was not getting enough support at work. I note that [redacted] does reference his use of humour when experiencing high levels of stress However, this case doesn't relate to a single instance of poor behaviour It relates to a number of instances of poor behaviour over a sustained period.

In respect of the aggravating factors to be considered, former PS Buffrey was continually and consistently disrespectful of others, discriminating against individuals personal characteristics He was in a leadership role and this behaviour can not be tolerated, not least that it was contrary to all the training and guidance he would have received in his career I also note that there have been two previous matters investigated as potential misconduct, relevant to this case. These matters were dealt with via RPRP.

I have read the officers personal record who has served the public for over 18 years.

The College of Policing Guidance states, the purpose of the police misconduct regime is threefold: namely to maintain public confidence and the reputation of the police service; to uphold high standards in policing and deter misconduct, and thirdly to protect the public

As the College of Policing Guidance states – in relation to public confidence, where gross misconduct has been found and the behaviour could have caused most serious harm to an individual and public confidence in the police service, dismissal is likely to follow

In respect of the breaches.

Authority, Respect and Courtesy - Officers must act with self-control, tolerance, and respect for the public and colleagues. Former officer Buffrey did not demonstrate self control or respect for those he worked with or indeed for the members of the public that he spoke about He breached this standard.

Equality and Diversity – Officers must act impartially and must not unlawfully discriminate. Former PS Buffrey did not demonstrate impartiality and used derogatory and discriminatory language amongst those who worked with him. He therefore breached this standard

Discreditable conduct - The behaviour of former officer Buffrey has breached this standard in that an ordinary well-informed member of the public would regard the conduct as falling below that expected of a police officer The behaviour therefore discredits the police service and reduces public confidence in the reputation of the profession

The disciplinary finding imposed is that former officer Buffrey would have been dismissed if he had not ceased to be a member of the West Mercia Police force. As a consequence of this finding, the officers name 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 2nd October 2026

ACO Rachel Hartland Lane

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 26th June 2025 of which this is a true copy.

Signed..... **Date.....**