



Memorandum

From: Chief Constable Pippa Mills

To: Former PC 21396 Rhett WILSON

Our Ref: CM/16/22

Date: 4th August 2023

FINDINGS FORM

ACCELERATED MISCONDUCT HEARING – Former PC 21396 Rhett WILSON

4th August 2023: Police Headquarters, Hindlip Hall

In accordance with Regulation 63 of the Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020, 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: Chief Constable Pippa Mills

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

1. *On the 28th January 2022 at Worcester Crown Court you pleaded guilty to 3 offences of the corrupt and improper exercise of the powers and privileges of a constable contrary to section 26(1) of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015.*
2. *On the 8th December 2022 at Worcester Crown Court you were convicted after trial of the offence of committing an act or series of acts with intent to pervert the course of public justice contrary to common law.*
3. *On the 20th January 2023 at Worcester Crown Court you were sentenced to 2 years and 10 months imprisonment for the above convictions.*

The breaches of the Standards of Professional behaviour alleged are as follows:

- *Discreditable conduct in that you have been convicted of serious criminal offences which undermines public trust and confidence in West Mercia Police. The convictions and sentencing were widely reported in the national press.*

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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:

The conduct amounts to gross misconduct

The following is a summary of the reasons for the finding:

I have received no response from former officer Wilson. The Federation Representative confirmed today that the former officer did not wish to participate in these proceedings and no instructions had been received.

The convictions were for serious offences. In the circumstances I find that the breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour is made out to the required standard and that the conduct amounts to gross misconduct.

Disciplinary action to be imposed:

I have considered the 2023 College of Policing Guidance on Outcomes in Police Misconduct Proceedings. As the Guidance sets out - assessing the seriousness of the conduct lies at the heart of the decision on outcome.

I have taken the three stage approach listed in the Guidance. 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.

The Guidance makes it clear that it is entirely unacceptable for police officers who are responsible for enforcing the law to break it themselves.

The convictions relate to both on duty and off-duty conduct. I find a high level of culpability here given the circumstances. There was very deliberate and planned targeting of three victims. I note HHJ Cartwright's sentencing comments: *"your culpability here was high. You selected three vulnerable victims, each of whom was dealing with the consequences of some form of domestic abuse, whether physical or psychological. You were the investigating officer, and you used your position, coupled with their vulnerability, to engineer these relationships. Although on the bare facts there relationships had the outward appearance of being consensual that does not lessen the calculated manipulation of people who were going through serious personal difficulties."*

In relation to the harm caused to the three victims, I have read their individual Victim Personal Statements. They have all clearly suffered and been affected by your actions.

The nature of the office of constable means that all police officers are in a position of trust and authority in relation to members of the public. You were trained to help such vulnerable victims. Instead you chose to abuse your position. The abuse of position for a sexual purpose is a form of serious corruption and such conduct causes substantial damage to public trust and confidence in the police.

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I am very conscious that policing has come under national scrutiny through high-profile cases where there has been a failing to prevent or protect women and girls from abuse and where such abuse and/or violence has been perpetrated by those serving in the police. Misconduct of this nature is wholly unacceptable. I highlight HHJ Cartwright's comments that: *"offences of this kind attract wide publicity and overshadow the countless occasions when officers behave properly and honourably in the best interests of those who come forward with allegations of criminal behaviour or complaints to make. The consequential harm caused to the police service is profound and long-standing. Offending of this kind risks weakening the vital confidence on the part of the public that they can trust the integrity of police officers. It is for this reason that offences like this inevitably attract immediate custodial sentences of a deterrent kind."*

There are a high number of aggravating features in this case. There was deliberate targeting of vulnerable victims for sexual gratification. There was a gross abuse of your position of trust. You took steps to delete incriminating material from your phone. You shared intimate images of one of the victims with others. Although there were some admissions in interview, you lied to the police when you said you had no similar relationships with anybody else. It was only when confronted with the evidence that you made further concessions.

There is no mitigation put forward. I note that you joined West Mercia Police in April 2019 as a probationary police officer; you had been trained and your training was fresh in your mind when you committed these offences. You were suspended from duty in March 2020 and resigned from West Mercia Police on 31st July 2020.

The College of Policing Guidance confirms that 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.

The conviction (and particularly the facts and circumstances in this case) have discredited West Mercia Police. This case was reported in the press and brought the actions of West Mercia Police officers under adverse public scrutiny. As the College of Policing Guidance states - In relation to public confidence, where gross misconduct has been found and the behaviour caused both serious harm to an individual and public confidence in the police service, dismissal is likely to follow.

The disciplinary finding imposed is that you would have been dismissed if you had not ceased to be a member of West Mercia Police force. As a consequence of this finding, your will be included on the Barred List held by College of Policing.

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

Signed:
Chief Constable Pippa Mills

Date: 04/08/2023

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. The officer has the right to be legally represented at the appeal hearing.

Form of receipt to be completed by officer or Federation Representative:

I acknowledge receipt of this written notice of the misconduct proceedings, dated 4th August 2023 of which this is a true copy.

Signed.....

Date.....