



In the matter of the British Transport Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020;

APPROPRIATE AUTHORITY FOR
THE BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE

V

PC William Pieterston [4720]

CASE REF CM/123/26

Regulation 63 Outcome Report

Location: Ivason House, 8A London Bridge Street, London, SE1 9SG

Date: Thursday 17th September 2026

Chair: Chief Constable Lucy D'Orsi

Outcome: Gross Misconduct

Sanction: Final Written Warning

British Transport Police
Accelerated Misconduct Hearing
Regulation 63 Determination
British Transport Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020

Case Reference: CM/123/26

Subject Officer (Rank, Number, Name): PC Pieterston

Date of Determination: 17th September 2026

Chairperson: Chief Constable Lucy D'Orsi

Allegations

The alleged breaches of the Standards of Professional Behaviour that were considered were set out in a statement under Regulation 51 as follows:

Allegation One

It is alleged that between 1 April 2025 and 26 April 2026, whilst using a British Transport Police issued mobile device, PC Pieterston exchanged messages with another that were inappropriate, derogatory, and discriminatory in nature.

This is said to be a breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour, namely Authority, Respect and Courtesy, Equality and Diversity, and Discreditable Conduct.

Allegation Two

It is alleged that PC Pieterston's actions detailed in Allegation One above, constitute a breach of the BTP Mobile device acceptance terms and conditions, in that he used a work device for communications that were inappropriate.

This is said to be a breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour, namely Orders and Instructions.

Allegation Three

It is alleged that PC Pieterston did not take appropriate action to challenge or report inappropriate and derogatory communications sent by a CPS Prosecutor.

This is said to be a breach of the Standards of Professional Behaviour, namely Challenging and Reporting Improper Conduct.

It is alleged that these matters individually and/or cumulatively breached the Standards of Professional Behaviour, in a way that is so serious as to justify dismissal. It is therefore alleged that this conduct amounts to Gross Misconduct.

Representation

The AA was represented by Lauren Hulett

PC Pieterston was represented by PC Thomas Jepson of the British Transport Police Federation and Ms Cala Randall of counsel, PC Pieterston attended the hearing

Legal Adviser: Hannah Hinton

Preliminary issues and applications

1. I was invited by the Appropriate Authority ("the AA") to impose reporting restrictions to protect the identities of the female staff members discussed in the WhatsApp communications which was the subject of the allegations against the Officer, and I was also asked to impose a reporting restriction in respect of the named CPS prosecutor. The basis for the applications was set out in the AA's case summary. The Officer had no objection to the applications.
2. I was reminded of my power to impose reporting restrictions under Regulation 59. I reminded myself of the starting point which is the strong public interest in open justice. Restrictions should be only those which are necessary to protect a legitimate interest. It is important to balance the strong public interest in open justice against the Article 8 rights of the individuals concerned. The Home Office Guidance, Statutory Guidance on Professional Standards, Performance and Integrity in Policing provides a non-exhaustive list of factors to consider in exercising the discretion [11.84]. That includes the welfare of third parties and prejudicing criminal proceedings.
3. I granted reporting restrictions for females named in the chat giving cyphers Female A – H. That list should be annexed to this decision and redacted from publication. I granted the application on the basis that the chat included private health and personal matters. I granted a reporting restriction to Mr X who was the other male who exchanged messages with the Officer for the life of any disciplinary investigation against him. I revisited that direction at the conclusion of the case because information was provided during the course of the Officer's evidence which touched upon his [REDACTED]. I therefore ordered that matters relating to Mr X's [REDACTED] should be restricted from publication.

Procedure

1. This Accelerated Misconduct Hearing relating to allegations of Gross Misconduct against PC William Pieterston 4720 was conducted pursuant to the BTP (Conduct) Regulations 2020 ("the Regulations"). Any reference in these proceedings to "the Regulations" or to individual Regulations thereof should be taken to be to those Regulations.
2. The disciplinary proceedings were brought by the Deputy Chief Constable of BTP, who is the Delegated Appropriate Authority to whom I, as the Appropriate Authority, have delegated my functions under the Regulations pursuant to Regulation 2(3).
3. The purpose of the proceedings was to decide if a breach or breaches of the Standards of Professional Behaviour is proved or not and, where applicable, to apply an outcome (Reg 61). I reminded myself that I could not find that the conduct in question amounted to Gross Misconduct unless it is admitted or unless I am satisfied that the matter is proved on the balance of probabilities (Reg 61(16)).

Materials and evidence considered

4. I received a bundle of evidence prior to the hearing. This included the Regulation 51 Notice served on PC Pieterston, his Regulation 54 Response and the documentary evidence underlying the allegations.
5. I also considered the Opening Note on behalf of the AA.
6. During the hearing PC Pieterston gave live evidence before me. He answered all questions posed by his own counsel, Ms Hewlett for the Authority and myself.
7. I confirm that in reaching my decision on all issues that I had regard to all of the written and live evidence, including the submissions made by Ms Hewlett and Ms Randall. I am grateful for their assistance.

The Authority's case

8. The case against the Officer is founded upon recovered SMS messages from the Officer's BTP-issued mobile device and force policies upon mobile device usage and expected standards. The Mobile Device Acceptance Terms and Conditions expressly prohibits the use of force-issued devices to transmit inappropriate or offensive communications and prohibits conduct capable of bringing either the user or British

Transport Police into disrepute. Similarly, the Acceptable Usage Policy requires all users of BTP systems to act professionally and in accordance with the Code of Ethics and the Standards of Professional Behaviour. Since the messages were sent using a force-issued mobile device, there is a direct connection between the conduct and the Officer's professional role. The communications at issue are those between himself and Mr X. Mr X and the Officer met through their workplaces. They were both regularly posted to Highbury Corner Magistrates Court, where the Officer was deployed as a Police Liaison Officer and Mr X was a member of the Crown Prosecution Service. The appalling messages sent by the CPS prosecutor were not challenged by the Officer and they should obviously have been.

9. On 1 April 2025, PC Pieterston and Mr X engaged in conversation concerning a female colleague. The exchange became increasingly personal. Mr X stated that he did not know why she "plays hard to get" and later remarked that he "still wouldn't mind being inside her" and that she must surely realise that he "fancies her". PC Pieterston participated in the discussion and responded with the suggestion that she is "playing the other side now... women only" and that she is "going through menopause", suggesting this could explain her lack of interest in relationships "probably why she does not want anyone", and further commenting that she knew Mr X "fancies the pants off her". PC Pieterston commented, "I fancy Female B." [5] Later, Mr X commented, "Female A should be happy I take an interest in her." The discussion continued with both parties appearing to speculate about the colleague's personal relationships and sexual life. Mr X suggested she may have "someone on the side, it's probably some fat old Asian bloke from her community" and subsequently commented that such a person would be unable to "satisfy her."
10. On 2 June 2025, PC Pieterston and Mr X exchanged messages concerning allegations that Mr X had informed a colleague named Female B that Female A "hates Muslims." Mr X sought to explain that he had expressed a view that relationships between people from different religions and cultures could be more complicated and denied saying that Female A "hates Muslims". PC Pieterston indicated that he accepted this explanation. PC Pieterston commented, "I knew the fancying was just banter" but referenced concerns that a comment had allegedly been made suggesting Female A would not date Muslims, noting that such a statement was "not a nice thing". The conversation concluded with Mr X expressing frustration at Female B, remarking "Why that idiot Female B can't keep her mouth shut I don't know."
11. On 11 September 2025, PC Pieterston and Mr X exchanged a series of messages concerning a female colleague named Female D. PC Pieterston suggested that Female D portrayed herself as working harder than others. Mr X responded by describing her as "absolutely useless", stating that she lacked focus and concentration and was unable to complete simple tasks. PC Pieterston agreed with these comments and described the colleague as "definitely a basket case." Mr X went on to describe the colleague as "unreliable" and someone who "hasn't got a clue", with PC Pieterston responding, "Absolutely."

12. On 1 November 2025, PC Pieterston and Mr X engaged in a conversation about perfumes. During this conversation, PC Pieterston commented, "Wow masculine perfumes are so expensive, but I will point her in the right direction I have to put up with her so it's only fair that she looks after me too." In response, Mr X replied, "I don't know how you do it how can you eat the same food for 35-40 years crazy." PC Pieterston responded in agreement. [This relates to his wife and arguably not engaging policing standards]. Mr X suggested that despite having "chased" Female A for a few years he would be "bored after a month." PC Pieterston responded, "But looking at what we have out there i.e. Female A and Female D...I would rather stick my dlick [sic] in a keyhole." Mr X responded by describing Female D as "pathetic" and "disgusting", stating that he would not "go there" if he were paid. He then stated, "the other one I would." PC Pieterston responded suggesting that Mr X was making him laugh. Mr X subsequently suggested that very few people would "go anywhere near Female D unless you're really desperate" and that Female A was "not much better" and that neither were "feminine" or "making any effort." Additional discussions focused on the age and physical appearance of female CPS staff, with PC Pieterston commenting, "the CPS do have some nice ones, albeit too young". Mr X referred to a female colleague named Female F as "that fucker" and "a pathetic child."
13. On 20 April 2026, during a discussion concerning future retirement plans, Mr X expressed a desire to own a coffee shop in Amsterdam. PC Pieterston replied, "You could sell some weed as well in there.... it's legal right". PC Pieterston then suggested that a female known as "Female H" could work in a "skimpy outfit" and provide "eye candy." Mr X states "she ain't eye candy" and PC Pieterston continued the discussion by suggesting that she would nevertheless be considered "eye candy" by some people. Mr X then stated "nor is that old Female D" suggesting he did not consider Female D to be attractive. In response, PC Pieterston responded, "Lol", suggesting he found this remark amusing.
14. During the relevant period, two versions of the Mobile Device Acceptance Terms and Conditions were in circulation. In both versions, paragraph 5 prohibits the use of a mobile device in any way that could bring the user or British Transport Police into disrepute. It also expressly prohibits the sending or receiving of inappropriate or offensive remarks, graphics, or images through SMS, MMS, or email communications.
15. During the relevant period, both Version 3.2 and Version 3.3 of the Acceptable Usage Policy were in force. Both policies require users to act professionally, responsibly and in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Behaviour when using BTP technology systems. The policies also make clear that there is no expectation of privacy when using BTP systems and that communications, including emails and text messages, may be monitored.
16. The Authority submits that the Officer's responses, both in interview and in his Regulation 54 response, demonstrate limited insight into the nature and seriousness of the communications. He seeks to minimise the conduct by isolating individual messages

from the wider exchange, rather than addressing the cumulative tone, context and pattern of the conversation.

The officer's response to the allegations

17. The Officer's response was set out fully in a Regulation 54 Response, he was emphatic in his denial that he had any intention to discriminate the women on the basis of sex.
18. The Officer accepted the terms of allegation 1, save that he disputed the categorization of the messages as "derogatory" and/or "discriminatory". While he accepted the conduct breached the standards of Authority, Respect and Courtesy and Discreditable Conduct, he contested that his conduct also breached the standard of Equality and Diversity.
19. He admitted allegations 2 and 3 in their entirety.

The Officer's evidence

20. The Officer gave detailed evidence which I do not need to set out in full in this decision but which I summarise. The Officer said that he was born in Ghana and he was the first member of his family to join a police force. He was a proud member of the BTP and had worked in the role of PLO for a period of 10 Years at Highbury Corner Magistrates Court when he developed a professional friendship with a CPS Prosecutor with whom he had to work regularly. He had worked for BTP for over 20 years. He explained that he would use his work mobile phone to communicate with Mr X. He accepted he had breached Force policies as alleged and that Mr X's messages were so inappropriate that he should have reported them and not engaged with the conversation in the way that he had. He said however, I don't demean or disrespect women. It was not my intention to be demeaning or disrespectful, that isn't my personality. I was trying to amuse Mr X. He explained his opinion that Mr X was [REDACTED] and he took his messages about these women to be in jest. He acknowledged that he should not have spoken about such personal matters as sexual orientation and health of another. He sought to persuade me that when he referred to one female as a "basket case" that meant she was "silly". He also conceded that laughing at the comments which he believed at the time to be 'jokes' was not right and with regard to his comment he expressed "I am sorry about that". He explained that: "I wanted to keep him on my side to get BTP jobs done and he was

harmless. I should have reported it I have been in the job a long time. Looking back, I should have reported it, 100 %.”

Ruling on the allegations

Allegation 1

21. I have considered the submissions made and the evidence before me. I am satisfied that the Officer's messages were vile and wholly inappropriate. The messages were clearly derogatory and the Officer was speaking and objectifying women in a way which was abhorrent and absolutely not in keeping with modern standards within society let alone the higher standard expected of a member of the BTP.
22. With regard to the question of whether the messages were also 'discriminatory' on the specific evidence before me they were not. I therefore could not find that part of the allegation proved.
23. Turning to the breach of standards, I find the Authority has proved its case on the breach of two standards, namely Authority, Respect and Courtesy and Discreditable Conduct. I have not been persuaded on the particular evidence before me in this case that the Authority has proved that the Officer failed to act *with fairness and impartiality and discriminated unlawfully or unfairly*. The Authority did not provide detailed submissions upon how the conduct was said to be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 (or any other act) or fell within the definition of 'discrimination' and/or was unfair. I note there was no evidence adduced from the subjects of the comments and on a plain reading of the messages in their context they did not amount to discrimination to the balance of probabilities which was the standard I had to apply.
24. That is my conclusion on allegation 1.

Allegation Two

25. I find that proved in its entirety.

Allegation Three

26. I find that proved in its entirety.

My findings upon the Officer's evidence

27. In terms of the Officer's oral evidence and response to the allegations, I found much of it to reinforce the Authority's case. I found the Officer's responses, both in interview and in his Regulation 54 response, demonstrate limited insight into the nature and seriousness of the communications. He sought to minimise the conduct by isolating individual messages from the wider exchange, rather than addressing the cumulative tone, context and pattern of the conversation and only in hindsight accepted he should have reported it. I did not find all of his account entirely credible, some parts of his evidence was illogical but I took account his nerves in giving evidence before me. However, I accepted through his (partial) admissions and his apologies, that he was now remorseful and would not engage in such conduct again.

Whether the breaches lead to a finding of misconduct or gross misconduct

28. Turning to the question of whether these matters individually and/or cumulatively breached the Standards of Professional Behaviour, in a way that is so serious as to justify dismissal, the parties invited a different course. Ms Hewlett argued the conduct amounted to gross misconduct, while Ms Randall submitted the conduct fell to be considered as misconduct only.

29. The Authority put its case on the basis that the conduct whether viewed individually or cumulatively passed the threshold for gross misconduct. I reminded myself that while the principle that each allegation must be separately considered clearly applies, the Home Office Guidance states:

"2.205A Where the persons considering the misconduct hearing are considering more than one allegation in relation to the same police officer, the allegations may be taken together and treated as a single allegation for the purposes of making an assessment, finding, determination or decision in connection with conduct which is the subject matter of an allegation."

30. Both counsel agreed that in reviewing the facts of the case, it was entirely appropriate for me to review the facts in their totality for the purpose of determining the level of misconduct (and sanction).

31. I rejected Ms Randall's submission and found gross misconduct. The threshold for finding gross misconduct was plainly crossed.

Outcome

32. I have considered what outcome would be proportionate on the facts of this case and would satisfy the purpose of the regulatory regime, which is to maintain the high standards and good reputation of an honourable profession, to ensure that public confidence is and can be maintained, and also to protect the public.

33. I have had regard to Part 4 of the College of Policing Guidance on Outcome, and I have approached my decision as follows:

- I have assessed the seriousness of the misconduct
- I have kept in mind the purpose of imposing sanctions
- I have chosen the sanction that most appropriately fulfils that purpose for the seriousness of the conduct in question

34. I have also considered the BTP values:

- We are proud to protect
- We care
- We do the right thing
- We strive to be better every day
- We are one BTP

35. I have considered whether a Final Written Warning would be appropriate and proportionate or to exercise my discretion to dismiss the officer.

36. My assessment of the seriousness of the misconduct is as follows:

- (i) the officer's culpability for the misconduct;

The Officer's communications were inexcusable. He should and could have used appropriate language and stopped Mr X from objectifying women and insulting women and co-workers in the way he did. The Officer was not a passive participant in the chat and he engaged in these crass and base discussions on more than one occasion and this was at several intervals in a period of approximately one year.

- (ii) the harm caused by the misconduct;

The harm is to the reputation of the Force and to those women who were spoken about and who have come to know they were spoken of in such a vulgar manner

- (iii) the existence of any aggravating factors;
- (iv) the existence of any mitigating factors;

The Officer appears to have been encouraged by a member of the Crown Prosecution Service. Crown Prosecutors are generally to be respected by BTP officers. While he could have stopped himself he was actively encouraged by the Crown Prosecutor who wrote surprisingly the messages which have been central to the case against him.

The Officer adduced a statement from Jacqui Johnson who stated:

I have known William Pieteron for approximately 10 years through his role as a Police Liaison Officer (PLO).

Throughout this time, I have always found him to be professional, diligent, trustworthy, and committed to maintaining the highest standards in his work. He consistently demonstrates excellent work ethics and approaches all tasks with dedication and integrity.

The office in which I worked relied heavily on information provided by the Police Liaison Officer to support Judges, Legal Advisers, courtroom staff, court users, and members of the public. Many of these enquiries required an immediate response, and William could always be relied upon to provide accurate and timely information, often under significant pressure.

William was highly respected by both his colleagues and court staff, particularly for his calm and professional manner. He communicated effectively with people from all backgrounds and was always courteous, approachable, and willing to assist. His ability to remain composed in challenging situations earned him the trust and respect of those who worked alongside him.

What particularly stood out was William's willingness to go above and beyond. He was never reluctant to provide additional support when required and consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to helping others. His reliability, professionalism, and positive attitude made him a valued and respected member of the wider justice system.

37. In terms of his record of service there have been no adverse disciplinary findings in a career of over 20 years.

38. I must keep in mind the purpose of imposing disciplinary action; and choose the disciplinary action which most appropriately fulfils that purpose for the seriousness of the conduct in question that is, to act proportionately.
39. In reaching my conclusion I remind myself that each case depends on its particular facts and I have had regard to all relevant circumstances when determining the appropriate and proportionate outcome to impose. This was a very borderline case between the imposition of a final written warning and dismissal.
40. I have had particular regard to what the public would think upon hearing the language used by this officer within the context of his messages with a member of the CPS. I was horrified when I read the message exchanges, and while I heard no evidence from the females who were discussed in the message chain, I would expect that they would be appalled, hurt and very understandably angry. I make it clear this type of discussion is not tolerated in the BTP.
41. Any breach of Force Policy is serious. The Officer should and could have reported the behaviour of the CPS employee and not engage in it himself. By doing so he has breached a number of policing standards. This was not a one-off incident.
42. I have decided to impose a final written warning in this case, for a period of 5 years, which is the maximum I can impose. This meets the seriousness of the offence; the harm caused and the aggravating and mitigating factors.
43. What tipped the scales in favour of not exercising my discretion to dismiss the Officer was his concession that his behaviour was wrong and while I did not accept all of his evidence, I did accept his evidence that he does not hold values of hostility to women. I found these exchanges to be misguided and extremely immature. He has now reflected on some of comments made by Mr X and accepts that these should have been reported. He told me through his written response to the allegation that he has learned from this mistake. During his evidence he confirmed that he has better insight now than he did then. I consider he still needs to reflect more upon his behaviour, but I must have regard to proportionality when deciding the appropriate outcome.
44. I have had regard to the fact that he is otherwise of good character and he has a lengthy service career with an unblemished record.
45. I expect the imposition of the Final Written Warning will serve as a heavy reminder for him to maintain expected standards and never lapse again. He let myself and the BTP family down as well as himself by such unprofessional and crass behaviour. Any repetition will be treated extremely seriously.

CONSEQUENTIALS

NOTIFICATION OF OUTCOME

46 In accordance with Regulation 63(1), I will submit a report to the Authority within 5 working days beginning with the first working day after today ("the Report"). The Report will set out my finding and my reasons for that finding.

47 The Authority must notify the Officer of the Outcome by sending the Officer a copy of the Report as soon as practicable after receiving it, pursuant to Regulation 63(3).

PUBLICATION OF OUTCOME

48. I must, pursuant to Regulation 63(5), require the Authority to publish the Report, subject to the harm test in Regulation 6 and to Regulation 63(9).

49. As previously noted, I have made orders in respect of reporting restrictions under Regulation 59. I therefore require the Authority to publish the Report applying those redactions.

Appeal Notice

You have a right of appeal to the Appropriate Authority, but may only appeal on the following grounds:

- The finding or disciplinary sanction imposed was unreasonable;
- There is critical new evidence that could not have reasonably have been considered at the misconduct hearing; or
- There was a serious breach of the procedures set out in the British Transport Police (Conduct) Regulations 2020 or other unfairness which could have materially affected the finding or decision on disciplinary action.

You have 10 working days to appeal once you have received the Outcome Report. If you wish to appeal, you must do so in writing to the British Transport Police Authority at btpa-enquiries@btp.police.uk.

You should state your grounds of appeal, whether you require a transcript of the hearing in whole or part, and whether or not you consent to the appeal being determined without a hearing.

In addition to the above, it is important you are aware that following the conclusion of this misconduct meeting which has resulted in a formal final written warning in accordance with the Authorised Professional Practice (APP) for Vetting section 8.50.1⁴, PSD will undertake a review of your vetting clearance. The vetting review will take into consideration your suitability to retain your level of vetting clearance relevant to the substantive role you undertake. The result of this process could result in no change to your existing clearance level or potentially the removal of the vetting clearance which in turn may impact on your continued ability to continue in your role with BTP.

⁴ <https://assets.college.police.uk/s3fs-public/Vetting-APP-2021.pdf>