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GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON COMPLAINTS ABOUT POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONERS

Since coming into post, Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) have brought real local accountability to policing in England and Wales and have driven positive change in their force areas. Collectively, PCCs have presided over falls to a record low in crimes traditionally measured by the Crime Survey of England and Wales, and have delivered value for money for taxpayers by finding efficiencies and ensuring sense in how police budgets are spent.

The Government is committed to building on the success of the PCC model by further strengthening their role. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 introduced measures to enable PCCs to take on responsibility for fire and rescue services locally where a case is made. In addition, as part of wider reforms to Police complaints, the Act has introduced measures to enable PCCs to take on responsibility for key parts of the Police complaints system, to bring greater accountability and independence to the complaints process.

With PCCs taking on a greater role in the handling of complaints made against their police force, and with the responsibilities held by a PCC increasing, the time is right to improve the system for complaints made against a PCC. I have today published the Government response to the consultation on PCC complaints, setting out the steps we will take to improve the system for handling non-serious complaints made about a PCC. As detailed in this response, the Government intends to:

1. Clarify, through non-statutory guidance, what constitutes a complaint, using the Nolan Principles to set out the expected level of conduct for a PCC, and ensuring Police and Crime Panels (PCPs) take forward complaints about a PCC's conduct rather than their policy decisions;

2. Clarify, through non-statutory guidance, the parameters of “informal resolution” and setting out that, where agreement cannot be reached, it is open to PCPs to make recommendations on the expected level of behaviour of a PCC, and that they have powers to require the PCC to respond;
3. Aim to ensure that police approaches to dealing with unreasonable complainant conduct can be used in response to vexatious complaints made against PCCs. Sector-led guidance developed to assist forces in handling vexatious complaints made against the police will be available to help PCPs in handling such complaints made against PCCs; and
4. Provide PCPs with greater investigatory powers to seek evidence pertinent to a complaint through the appointment of an independent investigator.

A copy of this letter and the consultation response paper will be placed in the House Library.

The changes to the complaints system ensure the fundamental principle of PCC policy - that of accountability to the electorate - is not undermined. These changes will improve the transparency of the complaints procedure and deliver more satisfactory outcomes for complainants.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nick Hurd". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

NICK HURD MP
Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service