



## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST



**Request Number:** F-2018-00924

**Keyword:** Organisational Information/Governance

**Subject:** The Chief Constable's Tweets

### Request and Answer:

Your request for information has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Act I can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold information to which your request relates. The decision has been taken to disclose the following.

#### Request 1

On Saturday 27th August 2016, the Chief Constable George Hamilton posted tweets from his ChiefConPSNI account, accompanied with a photo of him in full uniform. In his tweet, he shared an advertisement relating back to Sir Robert Peel's Constabulary from 1839, stating that conditions have changed, why don't you join us.

A second account, FightingMicrobe, responded stating that yes conditions have changed but then so has the job. This account noted that police these days do far more than detect and prevent crime. The Chief Constable responded, telling the unknown officer "well you're allowed to leave & seek another job - nobody is asking you to stay. Dry your eyes do the job or move on!"

On the 28th and 29th August 2016, this became a national news story, highlighting how officers felt that senior management didn't care how the constables on the ground felt.

Can I ask?

Was the Chief Constable personally responsible for these tweets?

#### Answer

Yes.

#### Request 2

Does the Chief Constable have to direct any public postings through the PSNI Media Centre?

#### Answer

No.

#### Request 3

Did the Media Centre approve of these late night messages?

**Answer**

The Chief Constable does not need or require approval from the 'media centre'.

**Request 4**

Was there every any formal investigation into the Chief Constable due to the fact that his comments could have led, and in fact did lead, to a loss in confidence in policing?

**Answer**

No. The matter was considered by the Chief Constable's Appropriate Authority (Chair of the Northern Ireland Policing Board) and discussed by the full board who directed no further investigation or misconduct proceedings were required. A fulsome and early apology had been made publicly on Twitter by the Chief Constable personally.

**Request 5**

Was the Chief Constable ever investigated or reprimanded for breaching the 2015 Code of Ethics?

- A. 1.10 Whether on or off duty, police officers shall not behave in a way that is likely to bring discredit upon the Police Service
- B. 6.01 Police officers shall act with fairness, self-control, tolerance and impartiality when carrying out their duties. They shall use appropriate language and behaviour in their dealings with members of the public, groups from within the public and their colleagues. They shall give equal respect to all Individuals and their traditions, beliefs and lifestyles provided that such are compatible with the rule of law.
- C. 7.01 Police officers shall act with integrity towards members of the public and their colleagues so that confidence in the Police Service is secured and maintained. They shall avoid all forms of behaviour that may reasonably be perceived to be abuse, harassment, bullying or victimization.

I understand, being Chief Constable, much of these investigations would fall to the PONI or NIPB however, I have also requested the same information from both bodies and the PSNI.

**Answer**

Please see the response to request 4.

Your request for information has now been considered. In respect of Section 1(1)(a) of the Act I can confirm that the Police Service of Northern Ireland does hold information to which your request relates. The decision has been taken to disclose the following.

If you have any queries regarding your request or the decision please do not hesitate to contact me on 028 9070 0164. When contacting the Freedom of Information Team, please quote the reference number listed at the beginning of this letter.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter. In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Head of Freedom of Information, PSNI Headquarters, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE or by emailing [foi@psni.pnn.police.uk](mailto:foi@psni.pnn.police.uk).

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you were to remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request you may make a complaint, under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the PSNI has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act. You

can write to the Information Commissioner at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out, however the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that PSNI replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ [www.psni.police.uk](http://www.psni.police.uk)

Personal details in respect of your request have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.