

IN THE WILTSHIRE & SWINDON CORONER'S COURT
BEFORE THE RT. HON. BARONESS HALLETT DBE

INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF:

DAWN STURGESS

**SUBMISSIONS OF
THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF WILTSHIRE POLICE
FOR PRE-INQUEST REVIEW on
17 December 2021**

Introduction

1. This matter is listed for a further Pre-Inquest Review ("PIR") on 17 December 2021. These submissions on behalf of the Chief Constable of Wiltshire Police ("Wiltshire Police") address items 1 (public inquiry) and 2 (disclosure) on the PIR agenda.

Public Inquiry

2. In response to CTI's submission at [18], Wiltshire Police agrees to being designated as a Core Participant in the Inquiry.

Disclosure

3. At the time of the last PIR on 22 September 2021, Wiltshire Police's stage 1 disclosure exercise was underway, with staff recruited (albeit some roles were still to be filled) and material being searched for and collated. It was apparent that Wiltshire Police held a number of sensitive documents and a number of sensitive documents in which third parties had equity. Wiltshire Police was in discussion with GLD about how issues around the sensitivities and third party equity could be handled most safely and effectively. One possibility was Wiltshire Police joining in Operation Verbasco, the disclosure operation being run by the Metropolitan Police Service ("MPS") and Thames Valley Police ("TVP").
4. At the PIR on 22 September 2021 the Learned Coroner commented (in the context of disclosure exercises) that it made sense if all of the police forces were joined together, (p.62, lines 20 – 25) and that it sounded an excellent idea to have a team dedicated to assisting the inquest (p.63, line 5 - 7).

5. Following the PIR, further discussions were held with GLD and it became clear that, to avoid any inadvertent disclosure of sensitive material, Wiltshire Police should adhere to the disclosure process developed by Operation Verbasco. That process is set out in the MPS and TVP's joint written submission dated 8 September 2021 at [6]. It was agreed between Wiltshire Police, TVP and the MPS that Wiltshire Police would follow the Operation Verbasco process, while remaining a separate legal entity and retaining sole ownership of Wiltshire Police material. Wiltshire Police will not join Operation Verbasco, but it is intended that there shall be a close working relationship in respect of disclosure to ensure that national security equities and the integrity of the criminal proceedings are protected.
6. In order to comply with the Operation Verbasco process, Wiltshire Police has had to obtain the necessary infrastructure and IT and human resources. Whereas Wiltshire Police's internal disclosure operation had 5 members of staff at the time of the last PIR (and has recruited 4 since), to comply with the Operation Verbasco processes a further 9 members of staff are required. Wiltshire Police is working hard to fill those 9 positions, but the pool of candidates is limited by the requirements for DV cleared and a willingness to work out of both Wiltshire and London.
7. While Wiltshire Police upscales its team, the existing Operation Verbasco staff have been extremely helpful in providing their support, as well as integrating and training the existing Wiltshire Police team. Wiltshire Police is grateful to the MPS and TVP for this assistance.
8. Since starting to follow the Operation Verbasco process, Wiltshire Police has taken the following steps:
 - a. Recruiting new team members as set out above – two have started and two will hopefully start in the New Year. Nine members of staff still need to be recruited.
 - b. Obtaining secure office space.
 - c. Establishing NSN access and creating a CT Holmes account.
 - d. [REDACTED]
 - e. Receiving initial training on scheduling and the process (ongoing).

- f. Sourcing CT Holmes terminals for Wiltshire Police (at the cost of c.£80,000), which have a lead date for installation of March 2022.
 - g. Moving the first lots of Wiltshire Police material (4,016 documents) to London for uploading on to CT Holmes.
 - h. Organising CT Holmes training for the New Year.
9. Approximately 50% of the 4,016 documents Wiltshire Police has moved to London have been scanned into CT Holmes. This has been done by MPS / TVP members of Operation Verbasco (because Wiltshire Police does not yet have its own CT Holmes terminals), for which Wiltshire Police is grateful.
10. None of Wiltshire Police's documents have yet reached the stage in the Operation Verbasco process where they are provided to the ILT. Wiltshire Police is not able to give a realistic date for when documents will be provided to the ILT, but it will not be until the New Year when additional Wiltshire Police staff start working on the Operation Verbasco process and their CT Holmes training is completed.
11. In summary, while Wiltshire Police has searched for and collated relevant documents for the purposes of the Inquest / Inquiry, as a result of starting to follow the Operation Verbasco process, the stage 1 disclosure of those documents to the ILT has unfortunately been delayed. The Operation Verbasco process now being followed by Wiltshire Police will, however, ensure that disclosure is facilitated more safely and effectively than it otherwise would have been.
12. It is emphasised that Wiltshire Police is doing all that it reasonably can to ensure that it has the resources required to progress its documents through the Operation Verbasco process as quickly as possible.

JOHN BEGGS QC
JAMES BERRY

Serjeants' Inn Chambers
85 Fleet Street
London EC4Y 1AE

jbeggsgc@serjeantsinn.com.cjism.net
jberry@serjeantsinn.com.cjism.net

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