

**Media release – no embargo**  
**Cleveland Police**  
**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

Statement from Cleveland Police Chief Constable Mike Veale following the conclusion of IOPC investigation over accidental damage to a mobile phone

### **Statement begins**

The IOPC has determined that there is no case to answer in relation to allegations that I deliberately damaged a mobile phone and in doing so tried to cover up sharing confidential material.

The investigation, relating to my time as Chief Constable of Wiltshire Police, was the result of an anonymous complaint alleging that I had deliberately damaged my two-year-old work phone to cover up the alleged sharing of confidential information with the media.

The damage to my mobile phone occurred on 23 September 2017, which was immediately prior to the publication of the final summary closure report into Operation Conifer; a national investigation into allegations of non-recent child abuse against the late Sir Edward Heath. As a result of the damage I requested that all the data held on the damaged mobile phone was retrieved, which it was.

It is important to emphasise that during the time I led the Force through Operation Conifer, a highly politicised and nationally significant and sensitive investigation, I was regularly warned by close confidantes and members of the public I would be subject at some stage to vexatious and false allegations to tarnish my reputation. Sadly this has been the case.

From the very outset of the IOPC investigation I informed Investigators that my mobile phone was damaged in an unforeseen accident while I was playing golf. Out of character for me I hit my golf club into my golf bag after a particularly poor shot and inadvertently damaged the mobile phone. I also informed the IOPC that I told a few of my colleagues at the time that the damage to my mobile phone was caused accidentally in a car park.

I am clear and always have been about why I gave a different account to some colleagues about the accidental damage to my phone. It was to avoid more unnecessary media attention and to spare my own obvious embarrassment for damaging my phone in such a ridiculous way and most importantly to ensure my colleagues were not aware of the pressure I was feeling at a time when I needed to be strong.

During the course of this investigation I have had the opportunity to reflect on my actions. The account I gave to some colleagues should not have been given. My reasons were clear to me then and are now. I wanted to avoid unnecessary, sensationalist coverage in the media. I regret that I gave any account at all as to why the damage was caused as there was no reason to do so as this was simple an accident. This was a mistake and I could have

handled it differently. With the benefit of hindsight I agree with Cleveland PCC Barry Coppinger that I could have acted differently. I want to take this opportunity to apologise for not handling this matter differently.

**Statement ends**

**Notes to editors**

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