

Meeting at Ashdown House on 6/4/18 at 10:04

Present: Vanessa Smith

██████████ – Union Rep

██████████ – Note taker for union

Gary Norton – Investigating Officer

Jayne Garrick – Note taker for investigating officer.

GN – I would like to open the meeting by welcoming all to Ashdown House. This meeting is to investigate 2 allegations made following a training course on 22/2/18. Would you like to deal with them one at a time or should I read them out together?

██████████ – Both together please.

GN – The first allegation is in reference to an incident on Monday night where an officer had punched a detainee in the face (several detainees had barricaded themselves in their room and had weapons and had made the floor wet and soapy. An officer was apparently the last one standing and punched one of them), Vanessa from the Home Office said he deserved it and “had it coming”. Dave then said “we don’t say that Vanessa”.

- The second was more general in that Vanessa from the Home Office seemed to have a very negative attitude towards detainees. This was shown through laughter at commends made, comments she made herself and her general attitude to violence e.g. “I’d go to town on them”.

GN – I’m only interested in Vanessa and I cannot comment on any behaviour or comments made by G4s. With regards to the first allegation, the concern centres on the comment “they had it coming”. Did you say that? Can you offer any context?

VS – In the training we were given scenarios and asked to comment on whether the responses were reasonable or justifiable. I was playing the scenario given to me by the trainers. The floor was soapy, one officer was down, there was a very high level of threat. I was just visualising the scenario in my head and I just meant it was a justifiable move. It was a life threatening situation as the officer was the only one standing. I said this in a training centre. The instructor corrected me and I took his comments on board. Training is all about learning. I have been working for the Home Office for 13 years and I have never had a complaint against me in that time nor been subject to any disciplinary. This was one comment when I was thinking in the scenario and responding in kind with the language that had been used all day. I go above and beyond in my work and feel very upset that this has happened. If I’m involved in incidents I do escalate them or I involve G4S.

GN – Is it fair to say that G4S were inviting comments?

VS – We were given scenarios and invited to comment, what did we think, was the action justified, and everyone agreed it was.

██████████ – Were you corrected by the trainer?

VS – Yes, I took it on board and I didn't repeat it.

GN – The second allegation is in two parts. 1 – General laughter at negative - comments in a room and 2 – I'd go to won.

VS – I must point out that I wouldn't use that kind of language in that dialogue. I can't comment on non specific issues. I laughed along with everyone else. People were acting up and I laughed along with them. My general attitude to detainees is positive. Any problems I report it and ensure other detainees are safeguarded.

GN – As I understand it, having read the guidance, your history has to be taken into account. I don't have any further questions, would you like to add anything?

■ – Surprised it has come to this. What is VS facing?

VS – In future, I will be very careful as people may misinterpret what I meant. Whoever made the complaint doesn't know me, or my history.

GN - HR advice is ambiguous. It could be minor to gross misconduct. The outcome rests with the decision maker and I was only commissioned to investigate. I will be writing a report on Monday. I've interviewed 2 hibiscus staff, a third has left. I've also interviewed 2 healthcare nurses. The report will be written and you will be shown a copy of these notes. I'll have to check whether you can have a copy of the actual report. Once the report is written it's over to Simon and Liz to decide.

JG – Any points you wish to make that you haven't thought of here, please email me and I will include it.

■ - thank you.  
VS – thank you

Meeting concluded 10:17