



PRESS RELEASE

03/03/2016 IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Police watchdog order Metropolitan Police to reinvestigate “offensive and racist” FB group after Traveller Movement appeal

Following a complaint by the Traveller Movement, the Police watchdog has ruled that a Metropolitan Police investigation into “racist” comments about Gypsies and Travellers on a secret Facebook group for serving and retired police officers called ‘I’ve met the Met’ was not thorough enough, because it had failed to contact any of the officers using the group.

The Independent Police Complaint Commission (IPCC) has ordered the Metropolitan Police to re-investigate the Traveller Movement complaint and to access the Facebook group and find, contact and interview all serving police officers who ‘liked’, commented on, or viewed the “racist” comments which included posters calling Gypsies and Travellers “f*cking pikeys.”.

The comments – described as “offensive and racist” by the IPCC - were posted on the secret Facebook group called ‘I’ve met the Met’. The Facebook group made national headlines late last year, when they were uncovered by the Traveller Movement and a complaint was lodged with the Metropolitan Police.

Screenshots of the comments held by the Traveller Movement and given to both the Metropolitan Police and the IPCC, show the group’s members discussing their hatred of “low life gypsies”. Both Gypsies and Travellers are officially recognised as ethnic minorities, making discrimination against them illegal.

“I never knew a pikey could be offended,” read one comment. “I thought they were devoid of all normal feelings and thoughts ... just my opinion based on many years of dealing with these despicable people.”

Another said: “There is not a small minority of criminals from the GT [Gypsy and Traveller] community – to all intents and purposes they all depend on crime.”

The initial complaint to the Metropolitan Police was dismissed and no action was taken. The Traveller Movement, who described the initial investigation as “shambolic”, appealed to the IPCC in late December. The IPCC investigated the handling of the complaint by the Metropolitan Police and made their decision late last week in a letter to both the Metropolitan Police and the Traveller Movement.



The Traveller Movement
Resource for London
356 Holloway Road
London N7 6PA

T +44 (0) 207 607 2002
F +44 (0) 207 002 2005
www.travellermovement.org.uk
info@travellermovement.org.uk

The letter – seen by The Travellers' Times – states that: “Considering the nature of some of the comments made on the thread it is reasonable to suggest that the officers concerned should have been contacted and asked why they decided to join the group and make the comments and also why they did not report the group or oppose the comments.”

The IPCC also reminds the Metropolitan Police that any officers who saw the thread, which is “clearly of an offensive and racist nature”, were “required” by the police Code of Ethics to “take a proactive approach to opposing discrimination.”

The IPCC also criticises the police for failing to ask the Facebook Page administrators – who are believed to be serving or retired police officers - for permission to view the page.

Yvonne MacNamara, CEO of the Traveller Movement said:

“We would like to thank the IPCC for their diligence in investigating our appeal. What is often called the last acceptable racism is obviously not acceptable to them.”

“We look forward to the re-investigation of our complaint by the Metropolitan Police. We hope that this time round they actually contact, interview and, where appropriate, discipline the serving police officers concerned.”

“Police officers must be seen to be free from racial prejudice and engaging in racist online activity undermines the whole ethos of the Police force.”

“We fear that the nature of the comments are the tip of the iceberg and are a reflection of both discriminatory practices and a canteen culture of racism towards the UK’s Gypsy and Traveller citizens.

“We hope that this whole debacle prompts Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe to follow the example of Thames Valley Police Service and order a root and branch review of how the Metropolitan Police Service treats Gypsies and Travellers – whether they are victims of crimes, suspected perpetrators, or their own police and support civilian staff.”

Ends

Notes to editors

About TM: The Traveller Movement (TM) was established in 1999 and is a leading national policy and voice charity, working to raise the capacity and social inclusion of the Traveller, Gypsy and Roma communities in Britain. TM act as a bridge builder bringing the communities, service providers and policy makers together, stimulating debate and promoting forward-looking strategies to promote increased race equality, civic engagement, inclusion, service provision and community cohesion. For further information about TM visit www.travellermovement.org.uk

Contacts

Yvonne Macnamara, CEO Traveller Movement 0207 607 2002 / yvonne@travellermovement.org.uk

Mike Doherty, Communications and Campaigns 07900 146 493