

10. I was concerned about a number of unexplained apparent coincidences with the death of Mr Whitworth and the death of Mr Kovari:

- Both deceased were found at the same location;
- The positioning of Mr Kovari at the location was very similar to the positioning of Mr Whitworth; namely at the time when each were found each was positioned sat against the same wall at the same location.
- Both were found by the same member of the public walking a dog;
- An apparent suicide note on Mr Whitworth's body indicated that he was responsible for the death of a Gabriel Klein (now known to be Mr Kovari) who had died at another location, which then made me question as to how the body arrived at the location in the churchyard;
- Drugs appeared to have been a factor in both deaths.

11. I can see that I spoke to T/Ch Insp Kirby later that day. I do not recall the nature of that conversation.

12. Following a further update from T/Ch Insp Kirby, given the circumstances outlined in paragraph 10 above, I considered that the investigation into both deaths should have been taken over by SC&O1 at the point of discovery of the body of Mr Whitworth (**IPC000203**). We had a suicide note admitting to the involvement in the earlier death of Mr Kovari and it now appeared that Mr Kovari's death had taken place elsewhere. I felt it looked all too convenient and that this needed an investigating officer experienced in homicide investigations. They would be able to provide Family Liaison resilience as well as additional expertise and oversight that is normally associated with homicide investigations.

13. Whilst I was unable to tell whether the suicide note was genuine or not I do recall, given the circumstances having questions in my mind about verifying the authenticity of the suicide note. As a consequence of this I did verbally discuss with T/DCI Kirk the need to verify the origin of the suicide note. T/DCI Kirk was of the opinion that officers did not normally submit suicide notes for forensic or handwriting analysis. This was not considered to be a murder investigation (at the time of our discussion) and there was no reason to submit the note. T/DCI Kirk explained that suicides notes are not normally submitted for forensic or handwriting analysis and investigating officers would only submit a suicide note if they were investigating a crime and there would need to be a

clear reason for requiring such a submission. What T/DCI Kirk described did accord with my recollection of the practice when I operated at the rank of constable, sergeant and inspector. At that time we would seize the note for the Coroner.

14. I subsequently learned from A/DI McCarthy that a member of the team had shown the note to Mr Whitworth's step-father and I was informed he had stated the handwriting looked like that of his step-son Daniel Whitworth. I had considered whether we should still submit the note for forensic analysis in light of this. Mindful of my earlier discussion with T/DCI Kirk I did not pursue this.
15. The next day (22nd September 2014), at 12:40 hrs, I received an email from T/DCI Tony Kirk (**IPC000218**). He advised that SC&O1 were not going to take primacy for the investigation. I recall subsequently speaking by phone to the OCU Commander for SC&O1 (whose name I do not recall) in an attempt to have them accept primacy for the investigation. I do not recall when I had this conversation. I recall the view from this officer was that, although there was an apparent confession to involvement in Mr Kovari's death, Mr Whitworth was deceased so there were no suspects outstanding. We discussed this at length, as I did not agree with this and felt experienced homicide officers should investigate both deaths. However, I conceded given at the time there was no clear evidence of homicide and the Borough retained ownership of the investigation with SC&O1 support. At the time the Borough had primacy.
16. The decision to accept primacy for an investigation rests ultimately with SC&O1. In the absence of SC&O1's agreement I would have no choice but for the Borough to retain the investigation given that the death occurred in my Borough's police area. The Borough can refer the investigation to SC&O1 again for its decision on primacy to be revisited should further significant information come to light during the course of the Borough's investigation.
17. Whilst I did not agree with the SC&O1 decision not to accept the investigation and that the Borough was to retain primacy, I decided not to escalate to either Chief Superintendent Ewing or Commander Watson. In all my years of policing, it is not uncommon to encounter disputes between teams and commands over primacy for cases and investigations particularly where the circumstances are not as apparent as they could be. The circumstances as they were presented at the time were unexplained rather than suspicious. On the face of it there was a suicide note that outlined the circumstances and there was no indication at that time of the involvement of other

parties. At the time I had some reassurance knowing that SC&O1 would be providing support to the Borough investigating officers.

18. I decided to hold a Gold Group as given the unexplained issues above I was also conscious of the media attention that this would attract and any subsequent community concerns. It allowed me a structure under which I could pull together partners, SC&O1 Homicide Team and other members of the Borough Police to ensure we were able to identify the risks, the issues and there were clear activities to deal with them. As SC&O1 were only providing support to the investigation, they did not attend the meeting.
19. On 22nd September 2014, at 16.00 hrs, I chaired a Gold Group meeting. I do not recall how long the meeting lasted for. From my reading of the minutes I recollect it was attended by T/DCI Tony Kirk, Insp Mark Joyce, DI Rolf Schamberger (all from Barking & Dagenham Borough police), Amanda Driscoll (Directorate of Media & Communication) and Glynis Rogers (from the Local Authority) and myself. **(IPC000043)**.
20. Although the minutes contain no entry under 'Primacy of each investigation', we did discuss the issue of primacy. T/DCI Kirk reiterated the point that this was not a murder investigation. The general feeling at the group was that the deaths were not suspicious and were what would be described as unexplained. Although I felt there were a number of unexplained elements (as I have articulated in 10 above), I accepted the rationale provided by experienced detectives. For this reason the focus of the investigation would be around supporting the Coroner's investigation, including conducting a special Post Mortem and other lines of enquiry. One issue was ensuring Mr Kovari's body was not buried or cremated in Slovakia. The post mortem and continuing enquiries would also identify any other issues. The Gold Group then focused on dealing with allaying community concerns and communications.
21. I did not progress to a second Gold Group. I had been informed that the Mr Whitworth's step-father had been shown the suicide note and had stated the handwriting looked like that of his step-son. T/DCI Kirk reiterated that he was of the view that his team did not need to send the suicide note for any forensic or handwriting analysis. My fears around community concerns at the time did not materialise and there was nothing adverse in the media. The work to support the Coroner appeared to be progressing