

Judge Morris's sentencing remarks were supplied to the Daily Echo following a request to the Courts and Tribunals Judiciary and can be found in full below.

“Stephen Cole you fall to be sentenced in respect of the offence of manslaughter which occurred on December 9, 2020, at the Travelodge in Christchurch Road in Bournemouth.

“The victim in this case was only 27 years old at the time. She was working at the Travelodge and on the morning of December 9, 2020, had no idea of the fate which was to befall her.

“Marta Vento was killed by you in, what can only be described as, a brutal, sustained and horrific attack upon her in circumstances where she was utterly defenceless during the 42 minutes it took for you to extinguish her life.

“She was relentlessly beaten and attacked in the most violent manner leaving her in a state where her unconscious body was unable to breath because of the bleeding sustained during the attack.

"She died alone; with no one there to help or save her."

“As a result of the reports prepared by Dr Sandford and Dr Kotecha (your treating psychiatrist) both of whom are authorised under section 12(2) of the Mental Health Act, both have concluded that at the material time when you committed this atrocious act of violence, you were actively psychotic which supports the partial defence of diminished responsibility.

“How this young woman, who had all her life ahead of her, came to be in your path that fateful morning is a combination of circumstance and a regrettable and irreversible failure by some to spot the signs of your psychiatric deterioration despite you and your father trying to obtain the anti-psychotic medication you so desperately needed.

“Your antecedent history in the months before this offence was committed bears witness to your mental health problems.

“This was made all the worse when you were released from prison and clearly became delusional. Sadly, the warning signs were not headed in sufficient time to avoid this tragedy. I accept that hindsight is a wonderful thing but that is, and never will be, any comfort to Marta Vento’s family.

"After you killed Marta Vento, you tried to clean yourself up and then took yourself off to the police station where you confessed to killing her. Marta's body was found by her colleagues and the police shortly afterwards."

"It goes without saying that the consequences for her family are devastating. They have lost their beloved daughter and sister and now have to try, in whatever way they can, to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives in order to support each other.

"Marta Vento was 27 years old when you took her life away from her. She was the beloved daughter and sister of Roser, Luis and Luis (jnr) Vento. She was a bright and vibrant human being, and her loss will be felt forever by her family and friends.

"The sentence which I impose upon you today is no reflection of the value of Marta's life. There is no sentence which a court can impose to equate to the value of life."

"I agree with both counsel that had this court been imposing a determinate sentence upon you, the starting point for sentencing purposes in accordance with the Sentencing Guidelines would have been medium culpability with a Starting Point of 15 years and a sentencing range of 10 to 25 years.

"Given the comprehensive medical reports and the background to this event, my task is to determine whether in light of the tragic events which brought about Marta's death, the sentence I should impose upon you is a Hospital Order under section 37 of the Mental Health Act with a section 41 restriction or an order under section 45A of the same act.

"Having heard the medical evidence which has been given in court today by Dr Kotecha, your treating psychiatrist, and having read the reports prepared by Dr Sandford both of whom are approved by the Secretary of State under section 12(2) of the Mental Health Act 1983, I am satisfied that you are suffering from a mental disorder, namely paranoid schizophrenia; that this disorder is of a nature which makes it appropriate for you to be detained in a hospital for medical treatment; and that appropriate medical treatment continues to be available for you at Ravenswood House Secure Hospital.

“I am of the opinion that because of all the circumstances of your case including: the nature of the offence of manslaughter to which you have pleaded guilty and your character and your past antecedents, which includes a history of mental illness, I have also considered whether this order should be subject to special restrictions which are specified in section 41 of the Act.

“Having heard the evidence of Dr Kotecha I am satisfied that because of the nature of your offence and also having regard to your recent past (including your history of mental illness) and to the risk that you will commit further offences if you are not detained, it is necessary to protect the public from serious harm and it is not possible to say for how long that will be so.

“Accordingly, I order that you will be subject to the special restrictions set out in section 41 of the Mental Health Act 1983 without limit of time.

“I have considered whether this is a case which could properly be dealt with in accordance with section 45A.

“I am satisfied that you will need to be treated in a secure hospital for a very long time and that given the nature of your offending and the regime which would decide your release and oversee it after release, this is a proper case where the hospital should have the overall control under the umbrella of a section 41 Restriction Order.

“For those reasons such order and restriction is hereby made.”

“Statutory surcharge ordered in appropriate sum if it applies in this case.

“I order that a copy of these sentencing remarks should be provided to Ravenswood Secure Hospital, or any other establishment having the care and conduct of this defendant.

“Any exhibits to be preserved until any review of this case is concluded.”

<https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/19343331.travelodge-hotel-killing-judges-sentencing-remarks-full/>