

## **Police, Fire and Crime Panel – 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

### **Confirmation Hearing for the appointment of the Chief Fire Officer of Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service**

#### Report of the Staffordshire Commissioner

#### **1. Report summary**

- 1.1 This report recommends the appointment of Rob Barber to the position of Chief Fire Officer for Staffordshire.
- 1.2 A report prepared by Gemma Derrick, Head of HR Business Partnering at Staffordshire Police and who assisted in the recruitment and appointment process is attached for consideration.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that:
  - a) The Police, Fire and Crime Panel consider fully the findings of the attached report by Gemma Derrick and her assurances that the selection process for this role has met all legal, internal policies and executive best practices;
  - b) The Police, Fire and Crime Panel confirm the appointment of Rob Barber to the role of Chief Fire Officer of Staffordshire on a permanent, full time contract with effect from 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021 on a commencing salary of £144,873 per annum.
  - c) In confirming the appointment the Police, Fire and Crime Panel recognise the significant strengths and personal fit that Rob Barber has demonstrated.
  - d) That the Police, Fire and Crime Panel hold me, as the Commissioner, to account for ensuring that a robust and effective development plan is in place to support the candidate in his new role.

#### **3. Further Detail**

- 3.1 The current Chief Fire Officer, Becci Bryant, retires from her role on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2021. The recruitment to her replacement chief officer has rested with Ben Adams, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to undertake.
- 3.2 The recruitment process has taken place over the last few months and Rob Barber, the current Deputy Chief Fire Officer in Staffordshire, has been identified as the preferred candidate for the Panel's consideration.

- 3.3 The attached report has been drafted by Gemma Derrick, Head of Business Partnering at Staffordshire Police to provide assurance as to the robustness of the recruitment and selection process for the Chief Fire Officer role.

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**Report from:** Gemma Derrick, Head of Business Partnering at  
Staffordshire Police

**To:** Mr B Adams, Staffordshire Commissioner, Fire and Rescue  
Authority  
Police, Fire and Crime Panel Members

## **Selection for the Role of Chief Fire Officer of Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service**

### **1. Introduction and Context**

1.1 The role of Staffordshire Chief Fire Officer will be vacated by Rebecca Bryant when she retires on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2021. This report recommends the appointment of Rob Barber to the position of Chief Fire Officer for Staffordshire.

1.2 Working for the Commissioner, the role of the Chief Fire Officer is vital in the delivery of the following:

- The Commissioner's Fire and Rescue Plan
- The Staffordshire Safety Plan 2020-2024 (the IRMP)

1.3 The Commissioner put in place measures to ensure that the selection process undertaken to appoint a new Chief Fire Officer for Staffordshire was properly informed by relevant and specialist advisors, who could assure him of the transparency, legality and fairness of the process, and most importantly the candidates fit against the identified competencies/criteria. In doing so the Commissioner used a number of specialist advisors during the process, summarised as follows:

#### **1.4 Specialist Advisors**

**Helen Slimmon – Senior Psychologist, Selection & Assessment, from the College of Policing**

Helen was responsible for:

- Ensuring provision of independence in the process, (outside of Staffordshire People & OD and the Commissioner), by facilitating the staff and stakeholder panel process, including personalised feedback to each applicant and the interviewing panel.
- Administering the personality assessments and subsequent conversations with all candidates.
- Providing technical assurance to the panel on the fit of the candidates against all professional standards.

## **Glynn Dixon – Commissioner’s Chief Executive**

Glynn was responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Commissioner’s requirements were met in terms of the recruitment process, business and service outcomes;
- Ensuring all aspects of the recruitment process were coordinated and worked smoothly;
- Ensuring staff, stakeholders and an independent representative were involved in the process.

## **Gemma Derrick – Head of HR Business Partnering, Staffordshire Police.**

In conjunction with the Head of Recruitment & Resourcing, Gemma was responsible for:

- Preparing the recruitment timeline and agreeing this with the Commissioner;
- Preparing the application and information pack and agreeing this with the Commissioner and ensuring this was available to all candidates via the chosen recruitment platforms;
- Advising the Commissioner on the relevant advertising / sourcing methods to secure applications for the role in line with the NFCC Leadership Framework and general best practice from the College of Policing guidance for appointing Chief Officers January 2021
- Ensuring that the shortlisting of candidates was conducted and candidates were measured against the criteria laid down in the role profile; and the leadership domains;
- Providing assurance to the Commissioner as to the transparency, fairness and compliance of process, both in terms of compliance with legal and internal policies alongside best practice executive recruitment techniques.
- Providing professional HR advice to the interview panel during the process
- Creating this report for submission to the Police, Fire & Crime panel on the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021 for their information to enable the panel to fulfil its duties which is to:
  - Review the proposed appointment
  - Determine whether it agrees, vetoes or makes certain recommendations regarding the proposed appointment
  - Notify the Commissioner of its decision and any recommendations
  - Publish its report and recommendations

## 2. Background

### Role Profile

- The role profile (**Appendix 1**) was reviewed by Ben Adams and Glynn Dixon. The role profile outlines the key requirements of the role to form the method on which to test competence. The role profile was agreed as suitable for use.
- In addition to the role profile a candidate pack (**Appendix 2**) was provided which contains comprehensive information about the role and Service :
  - A foreword that outlined the role of Chief Fire Officer with the aim of exciting candidates to join Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service detailing what was expected from the role allowing candidates to pre-select themselves against the role challenges and context
  - A number of documents setting out the priorities of the Commissioner and the Service
  - The conditions of service of the role
  - Application form
  - NFCC Leadership Framework
  - Leadership domains

## 3. Sourcing Candidates

3.1 In line with the best practice from the College of Policing, guidance for appointing Chief Officers, the role was advertised for three weeks with a closing date of 20<sup>th</sup> August 2021. The advertisement (**Appendix 3**) was placed in the media outlined below.

- The National Fire Chiefs' Council website
- Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Website
- Commissioner Staffordshire Website
- In addition to this, the Commissioner wrote to every eligible Chief Officer advising them of the impending vacancy following the announcement of the retirement plans of Rebecca Bryant.

3.2 The result of the above advertising exercise was that three applications were received before the advertised closing date. Two of whom were internal, with one external candidate.

## 4. Creating a short list

4.1 The three applications were duly assessed by the shortlisting panel which was made up of the Commissioner, his Chief Executive and the Head of HR Business Partnering focused on the following:

- Did the candidates meet the prior experience and qualifications of the role?

- Did the candidates demonstrate in their application a sufficient match with the technical requirements of the role?
  - Did the candidates demonstrate in their application sufficient match with the personal qualities required for the role?
- 4.2 The shortlisting panel took place on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2021 and recommended that all three applicants be progressed to the next stage of the process. An example of the shortlisting form is attached **(Appendix 4)**

## **5. Selection Process**

- 5.1 The Commissioner together with his Chief Executive and the Head of Recruitment & Resourcing agreed the formal process for selection.
- 5.2 A three stage selection process was recommended:
- An internal Staff Panel session
  - An external Stakeholder Panel session
  - Personality Profiling
  - An interview panel (including presentation topic)
- 5.3 The interview panel was provided with a comprehensive pack of information to assist them during the interviews, as follows:
- Role Profile
  - Candidates application forms
  - Applicants pack
- 5.4 The candidates were invited by way of email dated 27<sup>th</sup> August 2021 **(Appendix 5)** which sets out the stages for the selection process.

## **6. Internal Staff Panel**

- 6.1 The Commissioner sent an email to all employees inviting them to become involved in the recruitment of the new Chief Fire Officer by taking part in a Question and Answer session with the three candidates. This took place on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and was attended by employees of the service.
- 6.2 The candidates were provided with a briefing for the session in their invite to interview email and had been given a topic to introduce and discuss for 10 minutes. The following 30 minutes was given over to questions from the Staff Panel.

## **7. External Stakeholder Panel**

- 7.1 The Commissioner invited representatives of external stake holders to form a panel where the candidates would introduce and discuss a topic followed by a Question and Answer session. This session took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and was attended by senior stakeholders from Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Staffordshire University and Staffordshire Police.

## **8. Personality Testing**

- 8.1 Administered by Helen Slimmon the candidates completed a personality profiling questionnaire followed by a one to one interview to validate and explore the results.

## **9. Selection Panel**

- 9.1 The final selection panel consisted of:

- Ben Adams – Commissioner
- Glynn Dixon – Chief Executive
- Gemma Derrick – Head of HR Business Partnering

- 9.2 Representatives from the Staff and Stakeholder Panels were invited to provide feedback to the Interview Panel on all of the candidates prior to the interviews commencing. This process was facilitated by Helen Slimmon from the College of Policing.

## **10. Process**

- 10.1 Candidates were provided with topics (**Appendix 5**) in advance to prepare a presentation for all of the panels. The presentation to the interview panel (**Appendix 6**) was evaluated alongside the structured interview questions (**Appendix 7**).

- 10.2 The interviews were conducted on the basis of the pre-prepared questions and the additional 'probing' questions asked at the interview were to establish a deeper or further demonstration of the competencies. All questions were pertinent and relevant to the competencies outlined in the role profile.

## **11. Conclusion**

- 11.1 The wash up session of the panel concluded that overall, Rob Barber most closely met the requirements for the role of Chief Fire Officer of Staffordshire. The final interview panel was assured, before reaching their final decision of:

- Technical fit by way of a suitably qualified person
- Personal qualities, behaviours, competencies and overall fit for Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service
- Business acumen and service delivery
- Competency fit by way of suitably qualified person

- 11.2 The outcome of the final interview panel was to recommend that the Commissioner appoint Rob Barber to the post subject to medical and vetting clearance and suitable references. Further confirmation by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel will be required.

## **12 Recommendation**

12.1 Having taken all specialist advice and considered the opinions and views of all Panels, it is the Commissioner's recommendation that the candidate be appointed subject to confirmation by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel.

12.2 That Rob Barber be appointed on a permanent full time basis on a salary of £144,873 per annum.

### **Appendices (titles)**

1. Role Profile
2. Candidate pack
3. Advertisement
4. Shortlisting form
5. Invite to interview email
6. Presentation topic
7. Interview questions