

Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Report of the Chairman of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel

To Staffordshire County Council

In accordance with agreed practice I am reporting on matters dealt with by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel at its meeting on 12 October 2021.

The main items considered were:

Confirmation Hearing Procedure

The Secretary to the Panel's report explained that the Panel was required to hold a Confirmation Hearing following receipt of formal notification by the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner of his wish to appoint his preferred candidate for both posts of Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable.

The report explained that guidance on the role of the Panel recommended that through questioning of the candidate they should consider the 'professional competence' and 'personal independence' of the individual. To assist, the Panel had been provided with documentary evidence of the process followed by the Commissioner when recruiting to the posts and selecting his preferred candidates.

Consideration of the proposed appointment to the post of Chief Fire Officer

Presentation by the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner

The Commissioner reported on the detailed and lengthy process followed by him to recruit a new Chief Fire Officer for Staffordshire. Information provided to candidates was submitted to the Panel for information.

The Commissioner reported that Mr Barber was his preferred candidate.

Presentation by and questions to Mr Barber:

Mr Barber briefly summarised his career in the Fire and Rescue Service having served with Staffordshire Fire and Rescue since 1997. He went on to list the additional duties and responsibilities he had held both nationally and regionally.

The Panel questioned Mr Barber on various issues including the main challenges and risks facing the service; working within neighbourhoods; prevention and protection; working with other partners/services; communications and his experience in Staffordshire.

In his responses Mr Barber stressed that the challenges facing the service were the same as those facing the whole of society, such as Dementia, obesity and addiction, as fire is often a symptom of other causes and there is a need to work closely with partners to identify and address the root cause.

Mr Barber reported that in his view there had been a reduction in neighbourhood and community communication particularly with local Councillors and this needed to be restored so that information could be shared.

Mr Barber advised the panel that working relationships with both the Commissioner and other partners would always be based on him providing the best information at the time in order for informed decisions to be made.

The Panel unanimously agreed that the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire be informed that this Panel recommends that he proceed with the appointment of Mr Robert Barber as the Chief Fire Officer for Staffordshire.

Consideration of the proposed appointment to the post of Chief Constable for Staffordshire

Presentation by the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner

The Commissioner introduced his report which included information provided to candidates and outlined the selection process.

Mr Haroon, an Independent Interview Panel Member, briefly outlined the recruitment and selection process and the stakeholder involvement which had taken place.

The Commissioner reported that Mr Noble was his preferred candidate.

Presentation by and questions to Mr Noble

Mr Noble briefly summarised his career in the Police Service having served in a number of Forces including 21 years in the Royal Ulster Constabulary and his current position as Deputy Chief Constable Humberside Constabulary.

The Panel questioned Mr Noble on various issues including the main challenges the force faced; how trust can be rebuilt following the recent Sarah Everard case; Neighbourhood and community policing; and staffing levels.

In his responses, Mr Noble felt that the long term effects of the pandemic would prove to be challenging, with increased unemployment and financial worries leading to crime and Anti-social behaviour. Mental health pressures would also lead to the need for closer partnership working. Community policing and tackling some forms of anti-social behaviour would involve partnership working and looking at the cause and how and who could address this.

Responding to a specific question on the independence of the role, Mr Noble informed the Panel that the role of Chief Constable involved working with many partners and forming relationships whilst retaining accountability and operational independence.

Mr Noble felt that whilst the majority of police officers showed excellent standards of behaviour, the culture in policing needed to change and the highest standards of behaviour needed to be set along with a zero tolerance to certain attitudes which had

been accepted in the past. Formal vetting of police officers could only go so far and informal scrutiny and improved leadership was needed to increase standards of behaviour.

The recruitment of the right people and their retention was a priority, with clear performance standards and expectations set out at the start of the recruitment process.

Following a question on communicating with the public, Mr Noble stated that the correct type of communication needed to be used to best suit the issue in question and the audience. The right person with the right information needed to the public face, not necessarily the Chief Constable.

The Panel unanimously agreed that the Police and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire be informed that this Panel recommends that he proceed with the appointment of Mr Chris Noble as the Chief Constable for Staffordshire.

Webcast can be found at

<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1150&MIId=13776&Ver=4>

For more information on these meetings or on the Police, Fire and Crime Panel in general please contact Mandy Pattinson e mail mandy.pattinson@staffordshire.gov.uk

Details of Panel meetings are issued to contact officers in each of the District/Borough Councils in the County and Stoke-on-Trent City Council for posting on their own web sites.

Councillor Bernard Peters
Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Chairman