



Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel

Hosted by Somerset County Council Democratic Services



Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel 26th April 2022 at 10.30am – The Deane House SW&TC Confirmatory Hearing – Chief Finance Officer

Present:

Local Authority and Independent Member Representatives:

Heather Shearer (Mendip Council, Chair), Chris Booth (Somerset West and Taunton Council), Richard Brown (Independent Member), Nicola Clark (South Somerset), Peter Crew (North Somerset Council), Jonathan Hucker (Bristol City Council), Julie Knight (Independent Member), Alastair Singleton (Bath and North East Somerset Council), Pat Trull (South Gloucestershire Council).

Host Authority support staff:

Patricia Jones – Panel Lead Officer
Pippa Triffitt – Panel Administrative Support

Police and Crime Commissioner and Constabulary/Support Staff:

Mark Shelford – Police and Crime Commissioner
Alice Ripley – Chief of Staff
Paul Butler - Candidate

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Andy Wait (Bath and North East Somerset), Councillor Janet Keen (Sedgemoor Council), Gary Davies (Independent), Councillor Richard Westwood (North Somerset) Councillor Lisa Stone, (Bristol City), Councillor Franklin Owusu-Antwi (South Gloucestershire), Councillor Asher Craig (Bristol City).

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Confirmatory Hearing – Chief Finance Officer

The Panel noted its responsibilities to review Senior Staff Appointments in accordance with Schedule 1 Part 10 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. The Chair drew attention to the range of documentation provided in the papers by the Lead Officer and the Commissioner relating to the role of Chief Finance Officer and the steps taken to ensure the recruitment process was carried out fairly and transparently. This included:-

- a rigorous and transparent appointments process, including the appointment of an Independent Member who produced an endorsement of the selection process and ensured the appointment was made on merit in addition to the eligibility and legal requirements of the posts.
- The participation of Panel Members Jonathan Hucker and Julie Knight in the selection process to provide extra assurance and feedback on the candidates. The Panel noted their report attached as Appendix 1 to the Lead Officer report.
- The assessment of all applicants against an agreed appointment criteria and scored against a rating scale.

In accordance with guidance, the Chair reported that the Panel agreed a questioning strategy and key lines of enquiry in advance of the meeting. A series of questions were then put to the Commissioner and the candidate in order to satisfy the requirement that the overall process had been properly conducted and that there was a sound basis for the establishment of the post. In direct questions to the candidate, the Panel pursued the two themes of Professional Competence and Personal Independence to ascertain if the candidate met the minimum standards to carry out the role. A copy of the questioning strategy is attached as Appendix 1 to the minutes.

5. Consideration of Panel recommendation on the appointment of Chief of Staff

RESOLVED - that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended).

A closed session followed and the parties and press withdrew from the room. The Panel considered the candidate's performance and responses to the questions posed and the background information supplied by the Commissioner. All Panel Members gave their respective opinions on the Commissioner's preferred choice of candidate. It was also recognised that Paul Butler had served in post as OPCC Interim Chief finance for a considerable length of time.

Panel Members were particularly impressed with his responses to their questioning. In reaching this conclusion, the Panel commented on the candidate's:-

- ability to contextualise strategies and provide examples in support of his responses

- to identify the key steps that must be taken before allocating resources to the range of issues affecting the Police service – “everything starts with objectives and financial planning wraps around”
- appreciation of the importance of public confidence, the duty to the public purse and the clear governance structure needed to oversee and challenge all areas of expenditure
- to provide the consistency and continuity needed to support the PCC in making improvements and meeting the operational requirements of the force

Following full and comprehensive discussion, there was unanimous agreement that the candidate had demonstrated both the Professional Competence to deliver the role of Chief Finance Officer and the Personal Independence necessary to exercise the role.

6. Panel Decision

The parties re-joined the meeting.

RESOLVED - that following full and comprehensive discussion and on being put to the vote, the Panel unanimously agreed to endorse and support the Commissioner’s decision to appoint Paul Butler to the position of Chief Finance Officer effective immediately.

(The meeting ended at 10.30am)

Chair

Professional Competence

1. What do you think the role of the Chief Finance Officer is within the OPCC, and what skills and qualities do you feel you can offer which makes you the best candidate for this role?
2. What do you consider to be the current strategic challenges facing the police service and how will you seek to ensure the functions you lead can respond to those challenges?
3. How would you ensure sound financial planning for the PCC, both in the medium and long term, to support the delivery of the objectives of the Police and Crime Plan?
4. Can you give your best example which illustrates your experience at delivering outcomes relevant to the plan?
5. How would you seek to ensure that the financial governance arrangements of the OPCC are sufficiently robust to enable you to make certain that public monies are safeguarded and used appropriately?
6. Who do you see as being key internal and external partners in this role? How would you set about developing strong and constructive relationships with them?
7. What is your understanding of the relationship of accountability between the PCC, the Chief Constable and the PCP?
8. What is your best example of your actions in directly managing organisational efficiency and performance?
9. Do you think there's any merit in establishing how your financial colleagues in other PCC offices areas might approach the same issues? How would you go about learning of good practice emerging from other police force areas?
10. Can you provide an example demonstrating where you have contributed to a change programme through the identification of enhanced service efficiency and/or value for money?
11. Is there anything more you wish to briefly tell us about your experience that you feel is important to help us judge your candidacy?

Personal Independence

1. What would you manage a situation if the PCC was preparing to do something you felt was unwise or potentially unlawful?
2. Can you give an example of a time when you faced conflict with stakeholders? How did you resolve it?
3. How do you intend to maintain a balance between the deeper financial aspects of the CFO role and the need to meet the requirements and expectations of the PCC? Specifically, what would you do if the advice provided in the CFO role conflicted with colleagues or superiors in the Avon and Somerset shared services arrangement? Alastair S