

## **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL**

### **MINUTES OF THE CONFIRMATION HEARING HELD FOR THE POST OF INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER ON 24 JANUARY 2022 AT 10.30am**

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

(A denotes absent)

Christine Goldstraw OBE – Independent Member (Chair)

Councillor David Ellis – Gedling Borough Council (Vice Chair)

Executive Mayor Andy Abrahams – Mansfield District Council

Councillor Andre Camilleri – Nottinghamshire County Council

Councillor Scott Carlton – Newark and Sherwood District Council - **A**

Lesley Dalby – Independent Member

Councillor Michael Edwards – (substituting for Councillor Linda Woodings)

Nottingham City Council

Councillor Kevin Greaves – Bassetlaw District Council

Suma Harding – Independent Member

Councillor Rob Inglis – Rushcliffe Borough Council - **A**

Councillor Mike Introna – Nottinghamshire County Council

Councillor Neghat Khan – Nottingham City Council

Councillor Richard MacRae – Broxtowe Borough Council

Councillor Helen-Ann Smith – Ashfield District Council - **A**

Bob Vaughan-Newton – Independent Member

Councillor Linda Woodings – Nottingham City Council - **A**

#### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

Keith Ford - Team Manager, Democratic Services } Nottinghamshire County Council  
} (Host Authority)

Jo Toomey - Advanced Democratic Services Officer }

Pete Barker - Democratic Services Officer }

#### **OTHERS PRESENT**

Caroline Henry - Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)

Sharon Caddell - Deputy Chief Executive of the Office of the PCC

Mark Kimberley – Head of Finance, Nottinghamshire Police

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Michael Edwards replaced Councillor Linda Woodings for this meeting only.

Apologies were received from Councillor Scott Carlton, Councillor Rob Inglis and Councillor Helen-Ann Smith.

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **3. PROPOSED APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER, OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

After being invited by the Chair to outline the reasons the appointment was required the Commissioner responded to the following questions:

**The Panel has recently heard a little bit about the restructure of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner; please can you tell the Panel how the restructure will alter the role of the substantive Chief Finance Officer post, including whether their Portfolio will be broadened?**

- The role is always required and is included in the new structure.
- As part of the restructure all job descriptions have been reviewed, including the one for this post.
- It is difficult to compare to the previous post but the role has been clarified according to CIPFA guidelines.

**Please can you give an overview of the options you considered for filling the interim post and explain why this was the preferred option?**

- The preferred candidate is well known to us and is a 'safe pair of hands'
- We could have opted to employ outside recruitment consultants but this would have been a more expensive option and required the candidate to undertake the role to those with no understanding of it
- There was very little notice of the vacancy meaning there is time pressure to appoint to the post
- Colleagues have been widely consulted both in Nottinghamshire and elsewhere and this option was the recommended one.

**What are your priorities for the Interim Chief Finance Officer?**

- The main priority is to finalise the budget.
- This is a key time of the year with a lot happening and it is important that the office is robust/resilient.

**Please can you tell the Panel about how similar arrangements have worked in other force areas and the good practice you have learned from this?**

- Ms Caddell replied that she had worked in a number of other PCC offices with the proposed arrangement.
- Ms Caddell emphasised the importance of managing the situation carefully.
- Ms Caddell informed the Panel that in other offices a protocol had been adopted which helped manage potential conflicts of interest.

**Past reports to the Panel have noted faults in the financial systems which meant that some financial information was unreliable. Could you tell us whether the systems are now robust or whether further work is needed?**

- Mr Kimberley answered that the legislation did allow some flexibility in how wage figures were presented and that now the reporting would be done in the standard way

**Will the joint role have any effect on this?**

- Mr Kimberly answered that this would give the opportunity to embed the changed practices.

**The job description requires that the postholder will provide s151 Treasurer Service to the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Authority. Can you confirm whether the postholder will have capacity to do this?**

- The position had changed since the job description of the previous post holder had been developed and now the Fire Service has its own s151 officer now.
- It was confirmed that the remainder of the description is accurate.

**The Panel queried whether it would be possible to appoint to the post on a permanent basis by 28 March, expressing concern that there would not be sufficient time to do so.**

- Ms Caddell informed the Panel that the interim arrangements could remain in place until 30 April if required and that the Commissioner was confident that there was sufficient time to notify the Panel of the proposed substantive Chief Finance Officer.
- The Chair stated that the Panel could ask for a further report if a permanent appointment was not made in the agreed timescale.

The Chair then welcomed the candidate, Mr Mark Kimberley, who responded to a series of questions from the Panel, as summarised below:

**During your tenure there are some significant pieces of work that are due including the setting of the precept and the finalisation of the Police and Crime Plan – can you explain what you see as your role in these and share your experience of delivering similar activities?**

- I believe my role is to provide sound advice
- I have substantial previous experience of the Chief Finance Officer role
- My number one priority is setting the budget
- We are changing financial systems and this is a major piece of work
- We are facing supply issues around fleet; the pandemic had affected suppliers being able to meet demand
- I am now working 5 days a week, previously I was working 4
- The Chief Constable is content to let me use all the members of both teams, this is 24 staff, though vacancies and long term sickness present a challenge
- Staff do complete individual time sheets so it is possible to charge their work appropriately

**Please also explain how you see your previous experience preparing you for the role of Interim Chief Finance for the Nottinghamshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner?**

- I worked for years as a Chief Finance Officer for the Fire Service during my time with Gedling Borough Council
- I feel that by being asked to fulfil this role that confidence is being shown in me
- My experience does mean that I do have an understanding of the issues
- The split in responsibilities between the OPCC and the Police does not occur in local government so this joint role is much closer to what I have experienced previously

**From your own experience, what are the key processes and attributes that organisations need to ensure robust financial plans and systems are in place?**

- The work is undertaken with an incremental approach
- All staff need to be trained, not just finance staff. It will take approximately 18 months to train all the relevant people then a rolling training programme needs to be put in place.
- Strategic links need to be established between different areas – estates/transport/staffing etc
- Sustainability issues are becoming increasingly important
- The budget needs to be monitored, predominantly by focussing on outcomes
- Inflation issues need to be considered
- A risk management approach is needed regarding the allocation of resources
- The organisation needs to be open to challenge
- I like to focus on the medium term
- When I started with the Police the overspends were regular, in the last 3 years there has been a significant improvement

**Will the new financial systems mirror the scheme of delegation?**

- They will but those links do need to be strengthened and the scheme of delegation is being reviewed

**What do you see as being the biggest change or challenge that you will face during your tenure and why?**

- Setting aside the activities of the post, I see the role as about building relationships. I already work with the Chief Constable, I need to establish links with Commissioner, and the Panel, building on previous attendance at Panel meetings.
- I do have peers at other authorities in the East Midlands and have good relations with them. The proposed arrangements are not unprecedented and I will be able to seek advice if necessary.

**One of the biggest challenges will be serving 2 masters. How will you handle this?**

- I already have a close relationship with the Chief Constable and the Commissioner. 'Chinese walls' can be put up if required.

**Please can you set out any examples of good practice that you would seek to implement within the financial management of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner during your tenure?**

- The links between the Police and the Commissioner's office have improved but the procedures in the Commissioner's office are not as advanced as those of the police
- There are already a wide range of KPIs in place, though more will be developed
- Regular progress meetings take place

**As your tenure is time-limited, please tell us how you intend to develop effective relationships with stakeholders to ensure you meet the objectives of the role?**

- I do have good connections with key stakeholders already
- I held discussions before I agreed to take on the role so I am doing so with my eyes open
- I have discussed the situation with both our internal and external auditors
- We will adapt the protocol that has been used by others

**You have been with the Police for the past 6 years, what would you like to change?**

- Some procedural issues / some delegation issues

**Change can be both positive and negative.**

- In the short term there may be some loss of challenge between the 2 sides
- CFOs do stand outside the process to some extent, their advice must be neutral, they have to have regard for value for money on behalf of the taxpayer
- I am used to the rigour of challenge, from the HMICFRS for example

**In your line of work at times you will no doubt have been required to challenge a person in authority, or give them advice they didn't want to hear. What is your approach in managing such a situation?**

- You have to be confident in the advice that you have given
- There is not just a professional side to this but a moral one too
- You do need to put yourself in other people's shoes and imagine how they feel when given the advice
- Try to anticipate what is going to be asked
- You do have to be resilient and repeat the advice as necessary
- Useful to know that certain approaches can be stopped if illegal

**What questions did you anticipate being asked that were not?**

- Most of the obvious ones have been asked.
- I thought you might have asked about the 2019-20 accounts as they have not been signed off. This is partly due to Covid.

Before moving into the closed section of the meeting the Chair confirmed with Mr Kimberley that he did not have any questions for the Panel.

**RESOLVED 2021/029**

**That the candidate's answers to the Panel's questions be noted.**

#### **4. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED 2021/030**

**That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the remaining item in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the basis that, having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.**

## **5. PROPOSED APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERIM CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER – PANEL’S DECISION-MAKING**

During their deliberations, Panel members noted the following:

- The candidate’s extensive relevant employment experience
- Members were satisfied that Mark’s qualifications and experience meant that he was a suitable candidate and were confident in his knowledge and abilities.
- Some panel members were not entirely satisfied with the interim arrangement but given the lack of time were prepared to accept it
- Concern was expressed by the lack of notice available to the OPPC of the vacancy
- The panel doubted the post could be filled on a permanent basis in the timescale given
- The Panel could request a further report if the post was not filled by the deadline

### **RESOLVED 2021/031**

- 1) That the Commissioner be notified of the Panel’s support for the appointment of Mark Kimberley as the Interim Chief Finance Officer of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.**
- 2) That if the postholder is not in place by the Panel meeting on 6 June 2022, a report should be submitted to that meeting providing an update on progress and enabling the Panel to consider whether a further confirmation hearing is required.**

The meeting closed at 11.47am

CHAIR