

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES OF THE CONFIRMATION HEARING HELD FOR THE POST OF CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER (OPCC) ON 20 APRIL 2022 AT 10.30am

MEMBERS PRESENT

Christine Goldstraw OBE – Independent Member (Chair)

Councillor David Ellis – Gedling Borough Council (Vice Chair)

Executive Mayor Andy Abrahams – Mansfield District Council - *Absent*

Councillor Andre Camilleri – Nottinghamshire County Council - *Apologies*

Councillor Scott Carlton – Newark and Sherwood District Council

Lesley Dalby – Independent Member

Councillor Michael Edwards (*substituting for Councillor Linda Woodings*) –
Nottingham City Council

Councillor Kevin Greaves – Bassetlaw District Council - *Absent*

Suma Harding – Independent Member

Councillor Rob Inglis – Rushcliffe Borough Council

Councillor Mike Introna – Nottinghamshire County Council - *Apologies*

Councillor Neghat Khan – Nottingham City Council - *Apologies*

Councillor Richard MacRae – Broxtowe Borough Council

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

Bob Vaughan-Newton – Independent Member

Councillor Linda Woodings – Nottingham City Council - *Apologies*

OFFICERS PRESENT

Jo Toomey - Advanced Democratic Services Officer	}	Nottinghamshire County Council
	}	(Host Authority)
Pete Barker – Democratic Services Officer	}	

OTHERS PRESENT

Caroline Henry - Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)

Sharon Caddell - Chief Executive of the Office of the PCC

Mrs Gillian Holder - Candidate

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Apologies were received from Councillor Camilleri, Councillor Introna, Councillor Khan and Councillor Woodings.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

3. PROPOSED APPOINTMENT OF A CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER, OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The Commissioner introduced the report and highlighted the following:

- Legislation required the Commissioner to appoint a Chief Finance Officer (CFO) and the Police and Crime Panel to hold a confirmation hearing.
- Chief Constable agreed to Mark Kimberley, Chief Finance officer for the Notts Police, filling the post temporarily until a permanent appointment could be made. Legislation does not allow for the post to remain vacant.
- CIPFA guidance stated that it was preferable to have a dedicated CFO not a shared post with the Police.
- Following CIPFA guidance a joint protocol had been established in the interim to ensure there was a clear dividing line between the work being undertaken for the Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC).
- The post was advertised on the 14 February 2022 on the OPCC website and with different partners in order to attract someone with the experience and appropriate qualifications for this very specialised role.
- There were 9 applicants with 5 being shortlisted for interview, which took place on 27 March
- A stakeholder panel asked questions on a range of subjects including governance, police finance, strategic leadership, victim support commissioning and partnership working.
- Mrs Holder was the outstanding candidate providing good answers and examples of where she had made a difference. Mrs Holder had experience in the public sector and outstanding references.

The Commissioner then responded to the following questions from the Panel:

Could you elaborate on your reasons for appointing Mrs Holder?

- Mrs Holder had experience of working for both the Police and a Police and Crime Commissioner. She added that it would be helpful to have someone in post who understood both sides of the finances involved.
- The Commissioner stated that she found the answers given by Mrs Holder exciting. Of particular interest to the Commissioner was devising and delivery of priority-based budgeting.

Who sat on the stakeholder panel and how did its views feed into the process?

- The stakeholder panel included Nicola Wade, the Head of Commissioning at the OPCC, Nigel Stevenson, the Director of Finance at Nottinghamshire County Council and Becky Smeathers, the Chief Finance Officer at the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service. There were questions around partnership working and police financial governance and management.

Past reports to the Panel had noted faults in the financial systems which meant that some financial information was unreliable. This was raised during the confirmation hearing when the Panel considered the interim arrangements. At that time work was to begin to improve the position. The Commissioner was asked whether these systems were now robust or if further work was needed.

- The Commissioner noted the Panel's concerns and stated that she was confident her proposed appointment would bring a fresh pair of eyes to the situation which is what is needed.

There was a systems problem in the past that affected the payroll system.

- For three years the Force operated a multi force shared service system for HR/Finance etc which did not deliver capably. Following extensive work the services had been brought back in-house and two new IT systems had been procured, one of which covered payroll. Following that transition reports were that everything seems to be working well.

Where was the post of Chief Financial Officer shown on the organisational chart?

- Reference to the post has been omitted in error, but it was confirmed that the CFO had no line management responsibilities and reported directly to the PCC. Panel members were assured that omissions in the structure chart would be rectified.

What would be the priorities for the Chief Finance Officer in the first six months in post?

- The Commissioner stated that the priorities would be:
 - Ensuring that value for money
 - Pursuing the introduction of priority based budgeting
 - Embedding a new approach to accountability, for which she considered Mrs Holder had the experience to ask the right questions

The advert for the role indicated that consideration would be given to a part-time appointment of 3 or 4 days a week. The Commissioner was asked to confirm the terms on which Mrs Holder would be appointed?

- The agreement reached with the Chief Constable allowed for Mark Kimberley to continue in the interim, initially until September but this could be extended if necessary.
- It was hoped that Mrs Holder would be able to begin in post in July.
- Mrs Holder would be working full time at first but the situation will be reviewed, and in order to achieve an improved work/life balance, Mrs Holder would then work part-time.
- An update would be brought back to the Panel in the next 3 to 6 months setting out the arrangements for the role once the demands of the role are fully understood.

The Chair then welcomed the candidate, Mrs Gillian Holder, who responded to a series of questions from the Panel, as summarised below:

Mrs Holder was asked to expand on the contents of her CV and tell the Panel how her previous experience prepared her for this role, particularly in meeting the Commissioner's priorities for the first 6 months in the post.

- Mrs Holder had 20 years' experience working in the public sector including 6 years working for the Lincolnshire PCC as the Deputy Finance Officer.

- She was experienced in preparing annual budgets, working on the precept, delivering financial statements on time, and experience of working with the Home Office/Ministry of Justice grant regimes. She believed that she would be able to step up to the role from Day 1.
- In terms of the financial strategy that underpinned the Make Notts Safe plan, Mrs Holder stated that she had spent the last 7 years especially involved in financial strategy.
- Mrs Holder stated she was very aware of the importance of value for money, stating business cases were required for any additional expenditure, it was essential that finance was put to the best possible use as funds are finite.
- Mrs Holder indicated her intention to review the budget process to identify savings and looking at new collaborations and partnership working, noting that it was important not just to do things as they had always been done.
- Mrs Holder added that she had experience in seeing how a Commissioner holds a Chief Constable to account.

Mrs Holder was asked to explain from her own experience, the key processes and attributes that organisations needed to ensure robust financial plans and systems are in place. She was also asked to set out any examples of good practice she would seek to implement within the financial management of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

- Mrs Holder stated that CFOs needed to set the Budget timetable to allow sufficient time for engagement, to assess needs, and to consider the Chief Constable's suggestions before finalising the precept.
- She highlighted the importance of quantifying and examining any assumptions, for example those involving pay awards.
- A medium term financial strategy, a balanced budget and a monitoring system all needed to be in place.
- Roles needed to be clearly defined to protect both public money and individuals.
- Access to specialist advice was required, not just financial but also legal.
- Policies needed to be kept up to date.
- A risk management process needed to be in place.

The candidate was asked what she saw as being the biggest change or challenge that she would face during your first year in post, including personal challenges?

- Mrs Holder highlighted her biggest challenge would be around taking on the Section 151 Officer role. In the past she had other people above her, but in this post there will be no such protection. She stated that she welcomed the opportunity of being pushed outside my comfort zone and was ready for that challenge.
- She recognised that her current network of contacts, while helpful, would be less relevant in her new role and identified the need for her to build new relationships.
- The Panel was notified that the CFO role could be delivered in a hybrid way, with the postholder splitting their time between the OPCC and working from home.

A question was asked about the broadening brief of the role of CFOs by becoming involved in wider strategic matters.

- Mrs Holder stated that being a CFO was far broader than 'number crunching', key roles would be:
 - Overseeing the budget-setting process
 - Reporting on the robustness of the budget and the reserves position
 - Setting out the budget timeline and taking management through those milestones
 - Monitoring progress and producing the final budget

Mrs Holder was asked who she saw as her main stakeholders and how she intended to develop effective relationships with them to meet the objectives of the role.

- Internal stakeholders were identified as:
 - The Commissioner
 - The OPCC Chief Executive
 - The Force CFO
- External stakeholders were identified as including:
 - The Police and Crime Panel
 - CFOs in partner organisations
 - Auditors
- The way in which Mrs Holder said she would build those relationships included:
 - Delivering on time

- Involving stakeholders as appropriate and listening to them
- Attending joint meetings and meeting with stakeholders on a one-to-one basis.
- Mrs Holder also indicated she would retain the contacts made whilst working in Lincolnshire, who would be able to provide support and advice for any matters in her new roles that were outside her previous experience.

The candidate was asked how she saw her role relating to the Police and Crime Panel.

- Mrs Holder indicated that she had a role supporting the Commissioner in her work for the Panel and would attend meetings, including the budget workshops, and learn what the Panel requires.

Mrs Holder was asked about her approach managing situations where she has needed to challenge a person in authority or give them advice that they may not wish to hear.

- Mrs Holder had experience of challenging those in authority and recognised that as the Section 151 Officer she would be in an exposed position.
- She explained that she would provide evidence to justify her advice or a decision she had to make, taking the time to explain the rationale behind it. She also said she would try to provide an alternative where there was one available.
- She stated she was clear of the requirements of the role and aware of the ultimate steps that were available for her use if required.

Mrs Holder was asked about whether, in her experience, she had seen cost accounting, where costs are tracked, used in the public sector.

- While Mrs Holder acknowledged it had its good points, she stated that she had never seen it used successfully. She stated that it was difficult to implement, needed high levels of up-front investment and was reliant on accurate input.

A question was also asked about the use of risk analysis in a CFO role and the point at which risks were escalated higher up the organisation.

- Mrs Holder stated that risk awareness was vital and had an expectation that they would be incorporated in all business cases.

- She said that she would monitor and assess the risks and that if she had concerns she would commission a more rigorous review and implement mitigation measures. At that point a decision would be made as to whether the risk needed to be escalated.

Before moving into the closed section of the meeting the Chair confirmed with Mrs Holder that she did not have any questions for the Panel.

The Chair asked the Commissioner about when Mrs Holder would start in her new post. It is hoped that Mrs Holder will start in post in July but this may be delayed until August subject to vetting procedures. An agreement has already been reached with the Chief Constable for Mr Kimberley to cover until September if required and this can be extended if necessary.

RESOLVED 2022/014

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

4. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

RESOLVED 2022/015

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 A CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER – PANEL'S DECISION-MAKING

During their deliberations, Panel members noted the following:

- The candidate's responses were detailed.
- The responses demonstrated both Mrs Holder's technical knowledge combined with an ability to form an independent opinion and formulate an argument to support that view.
- The Panel was assured that Mrs Holder had the appropriate skills and knowledge to fulfil the role, balancing the technical with practicality and pragmatism.

RESOLVED 2022/016

- 1) That the Commissioner be notified of the Panel's support for the appointment of Gillian Holder as the Chief Finance Officer of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.**

- 2) That an update be provided at the June meeting of the Panel of Mrs Holder's confirmed start date.**
- 3) That the Panel supports the extension of the current interim arrangement of sharing the Nottinghamshire Police Force Chief Financial Officer until Mrs Holder is able to take up her post.**
- 4) That a report be brought to the September meeting of the Panel should Mrs Holder not be in post or if any issues arise during the process.**

The meeting closed at 11.35am

CHAIR