

Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel held on 31 July 2013

Present:

Members of the Panel

Councillors:

Michael Doody	Warwick District Council (Vice-Chair in the Chair)
Michael Brain	Stratford on Avon District Council (substitute for Councillor Gillian Roache)
Nicola Davies	Warwickshire County Council
Jenny Fradgley	Warwickshire County Council
Julie Jackson	Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council (substitute for Councillor Dennis Harvey)
Phillip Morris-Jones	Warwickshire County Council
Peter Morson	North Warwickshire Borough Council
Derek Poole	Rugby Borough Council
June Tandy	Warwickshire County Council

Co-opted Independent members

Bob Malloy
Robin Verso

Invitee:

Mr Neil Hewison (see minute 4 below).

PCC Office

Ron Ball	Police and Crime Commissioner
Eric Wood	Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Mark Gore	Interim Chief Executive

WCC Officers

Jane Pollard	Governance Advisor
Janet Purcell	Democratic Services Manager

1. Apologies for absence.

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Dennis Harvey (Chair) Nuneaton & Bedworth Council. In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Michael Doody, Vice-Chair, chaired the meeting.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Gillian Roache (Stratford on Avon District Council) and Councillor Peter Fowler (Warwickshire County Council).

2. Members' Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-pecuniary Interests

Councillor Derek Poole declared a personal interest as an applicant for the post. Robin Verso declared a personal interest as Chair of the Probation Trust.

3. Confirmatory Hearing – Chief Executive

Ron Ball, Police and Crime Commissioner, outlined the recruitment and selection process that had led him to the proposed appointment of Mr Neil Hewison.

Mr Ball reminded the panel that it was a legal obligation for him to appoint a Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer although the exact role was not prescribed. The Chief Executive of the previous Police Authority continued to support the new Office until the end of December but there was little time to undertake a recruitment campaign that would ensure there was no gap in support. For this reason the PCC had appointed Mark Gore to undertake the role of Interim Chief Executive, so ensuring continuity of support and allowing time to define the role and develop a job description and specification for the permanent post. Mr Ball took the opportunity to thank Mark Gore for his excellent support as Interim Chief Executive.

Mr Ball explained that, given the strategic alliance with West Mercia, he had felt obliged to first consider the possibility of this being a joint chief executive post with West Mercia but had discounted this.

The post had been advertised on the Warwickshire PCC website, APCC, PAC, Police and West Midlands Job but had decided not to advertise nationally. The advertisement had brought forward a very strong field of candidates and 12 were shortlisted. Mr Ball undertook structured questioning of the candidates (nine in person and three by telephone). Following this and discussion with Eric Wood (the Deputy PCC) and Mark Gore (Interim Chief Executive) the candidates were further shortlisted to six.

The interviews had been undertaken with the assistance of Chris Cade (Chair of Warwickshire Neighbourhood Watch); Lesley Tregear (Youth Justice Service); Paul Tolley (Chief Executive Warwickshire CAVA); Karen Manners (Assistant Chief Constable for the Alliance); Mark Ryder (Head of Localities and Community Safety, WCC) and Mike Buckenham (Chair of Warwickshire Police Strategic Independent Advisory Group). Two panels interviewed each candidate, one focussing on the role of the Chief Executive and the other on the challenges over the next two years.

Mr Ball explained that he had taken legal advice on the selection process and on this advice had decided not to include members of the Police and Crime Panel as this could taint the ability of the Panel to later undertake its scrutiny role.

The final interviews were undertaken by the PCC and Deputy PCC and they had concluded that Mr Hewison was the most suitable candidate out of a very strong field.

Questions from the Panel to Ron Ball, PCC, on the selection process

(1) Why was no member of the Panel involved/an observer in the selection process?

Members expressed disappointment that a Panel member had not been included in some way in the selection process. This had been the case in other parts of the country and was now being promoted as good practise. The PCC was asked whether he would reconsider this in any future appointments.

Mr Ball replied that he would look at this point again but that he had considered this carefully and acted on legal advice.

(2) Can the PCC give assurance that there is no favouritism in the appointment of a former police officer and that Mr Hewison will be independent of the Police?

Mr Ball replied that he had had no previous knowledge of Mr Hewison and that the PCC Office was independent of the Police (which was one reason why the PCC Office is in separate premises from the Police). Mr Ball had looked at all candidates and was convinced Mr Hewison was the best and had was confident that Mr Hewison is a man of very high integrity and that he will be independent and able to support the PCC in holding the Chief Constable to account.

(3) Equality and Diversity in the selection process

The Panel was advised that six of the applicants were women and one was in the final shortlist. It was not possible to give an exact answer on how many did not have experience of policing or of the criminal justice system.

The Chair thanked Mr Ball for his attendance and advised that the Panel would question Mr Hewison and then agree a response for forwarding to the PCC. Mr Ball left the meeting at this point.

Questions from the Panel to Mr Neil Hewison

(1) Independence from the Police

Mr Hewison was asked how he would be objective in his role of supporting the PCC in holding the Chief Constable to account, given his previous Police involvement and in particular how he would deal with complaints.

Mr Hewison replied that he had 31 years in the Police force and that his focus had always been on trying to improve policing. He had attained a senior position on merit and had always challenged when he thought he

should challenge. There are difficult times ahead and he can bring knowledge and experience to the role.

Mr Hewison added that he had extensive experience of complaints handling – including complaints against close colleagues. If something was wrong he would deal with it.

(2) Criminal Justice System

Mr Hewison was asked whether there were improvements in the criminal justice system he would like to see and how would he encourage tackling these.

Mr Hewison replied that the system was still disjointed and victims not at the centre and he saw a role for the local justice board and the PCC in pulling it together. The national strategy is very ambitious and there were issues to be tackled in the light of the changes in Probation and the review of Courts Services

(3) Public Engagement

Mr Hewison stated that his initial thoughts were that the whole of the PCC Office had a part in ensuring effective communication and engagement with communities, police and this Panel. In his view there needed to be a properly thought through engagement plan for the community. This would include links with SNTs, voluntary and strategic partners, youth, minority and ethnic communities etc. One key aspect was how information is being captured and used, including how the best is made of the website.

Mr Hewison added that he expected the PCC would attend the key forums but that the rest of the team would have interaction at a lower level.

(4) Effective communication of decisions

Mr Hewison was asked how he would ensure substantial changes or decisions he took were communicated effectively to staff and partners.

Mr Hewison replied that he would ensure all decisions were properly evidenced and are publically available, including for this Panel and he would seek to get an understanding of what the Panel want.

Mr Hewison added that at present there was no representative from the PCC at Community Safety Partnerships (who now get their funding from the PCC). There is a need to ensure there is effective commissioning and public scrutiny and active membership of the CSPs would help this.

(5) Respect for Diversity

Mr Hewison was asked how the office of the PCC takes into account the diverse needs of the county and transfers these needs into actions.

Mr Hewison replied that it was first important to make links with the communities. This could be by using the independent advisory groups and bodies such as WREP. It is important that the PCC listens and makes decisions based on needs.

(6) Relationship with the Panel

Mr Hewison was asked what he considered this relationship should be and how would he develop it.

Mr Hewison replied that saw the role of the Panel as critical friend, challenge, and support. As this is a new role he looked to guidance from the Panel that would help him develop his role and ensure a positive working relationship.

(7) Personal Development

Mr Hewison was asked whether there were areas where he considered he required further experience.

Mr Hewison looked forward to gaining a clearer understanding of the work of CSPs and what are the priorities and also an understanding of the County Council and political environment.

(8) Relationship between the role of Chief Executive and that of Chief Constable

Mr Hewison replied that there must be mutual respect that allowed for scrutiny and challenge. He added that the PCC Office was concerned with more than policing and encompassed crime reduction, bringing in wide range of agencies and partners.

(9) Working within the Strategic Alliance

Mr Hewison was asked how he would ensure effective working relationship with West Mercia and replied that it was essential that there is close working between the two Chief Executives. It is important to monitor the savings but more important to ensure the blueprint delivers what is wanted for Warwickshire.

The Chair thanked Mr Hewison on behalf of the Panel for his attendance and advised that the Panel's conclusion would be forwarded in writing to the PCC.

4. Exclusion of the public

The Panel agreed:

‘That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the item mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972’.

5. Confirmatory Hearing – Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer

The Panel considered the proposed appointment of Mr Neil Hewison. The Panel agreed that Mr Hewison had answered their questions well, demonstrating both a good understanding of the key areas with which he will need to engage and a willingness to learn in those areas that will be new to him.

The Panel discussed the issue of independence in the role and concluded that Mr Hewison had responded in a way that gave assurance that he would operate with the necessary independence and integrity. The Panel agreed that it should advise the PCC of his need to positively support and encourage such independence to ensure the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner can operate in a way which maintains public confidence. The Panel also wished to ask the PCC to reconsider the role of Panel members and the use of a general recruitment website over a wider geographical area, for any future appointments.

Resolved

- (1) That the Police and Crime Panel support the appointment of Mr Neil Hewison to the post of Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer.
- (2) That a confirmatory letter be sent to the PCC and that this include the points minuted above. (The letter is appended to these minutes).

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Chairman