

Minutes of a meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Police and Crime Panel held at County Hall, Glenfield on Monday, 4 November 2019.

PRESENT

Cllr. Michael Rickman (in the Chair)

Cllr. Tom Barkley
Ms Mehrunnisa Lalani
Mr. I. D. Ould OBE CC
Cllr. Elaine Pantling

Cllr. Les Phillimore
Cllr. Manjit Kaur Saini
Cllr. Paul Westley
Cllr. Andrew Woodman

Apologies

Mr Keith Culverwell, Cllr. Kevin Loydall, Cllr. Michael Mullaney, Cllr. Joe Orson, Cllr. Sharmen Rahmen and Cllr. Alan Walters

In attendance

Lord Willy Bach – Police and Crime Commissioner
Paul Dawkins – Proposed candidate for Chief Finance Officer at Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Paul Hindson – Chief Executive Officer, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

32. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2019 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

33. Public Question Time.

There were no questions submitted.

34. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

35. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

36. Confirmation Hearing for Chief Finance Officer at OPCC.

The Police and Crime Panel considered a report of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) in regard to its proposed appointment of Mr. Paul Dawkins to the post of Chief Finance Officer. A copy of the report of the OPCC, marked 'Agenda Item 5', is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. Paul Dawkins to the Hearing. Officers and Panel members each introduced themselves to Mr Dawkins.

The Chairman outlined the process to be adhered to, taking those present through a process document which had been circulated to all members.

The Chairman invited the PCC to explain why he chose Mr Dawkins for the role. The PCC stated that given that there was a PCC election in May 2020 and the PCC was not standing for re-election it would not be sensible to appoint a permanent Chief Finance Officer at the current time particularly as the incoming PCC may wish to choose his own staff. The PCC informed the Panel that Mr Dawkins had carried out the role previously on a temporary basis for several months, at a time when the budget process was being undertaken and Mr Dawkins had ensured that the budget discussions between Leicestershire Police and the OPCC gone well. The PCC stated that he was aware of a potential conflict of interest with Mr Dawkins carrying out the role of Chief Finance Officer at the OPCC at the same time as being Assistant Chief Officer – Finance & Resources at Leicestershire Police however the previous time Mr Dawkins had the two roles a protocol had been put in place regarding conflicts of interest (Appendix B) which had worked well and would be used again should Mr Dawkins continue to carry out the two roles. The PCC informed the Panel that in some other Force areas the same person carried out both the Chief Finance Officer role for the Force and for the OPCC on a permanent basis so this was not an untested way of working. The PCC concluded that he was confident that Mr Dawkins would make an excellent temporary Chief Finance Officer for the OPCC.

(The PCC left the room.)

The Chairman invited Mr Dawkins to explain why he chose to undertake the role of Chief Finance Officer and how he felt he was qualified for the role. In response Mr Dawkins stated that he had been invited by the PCC to cover the role on a temporary basis and he was delighted to assist the PCC and OPCC. Mr Dawkins stated that he joined Leicestershire Police in 1996 as a Corporate Accountant and in the year 2000 he was promoted to Finance Director and had therefore been part of the Chief Officer team for 19 years. Mr Dawkins explained that in recent years there had been closer collaboration between the police forces in Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire and Mr Dawkins had led on the areas of finance, estates and fleet across all three forces. He had also covered the role of Chief Finance Officer for the Northamptonshire OPCC on a temporary basis at the same time as being Assistant Chief Officer – Finance & Resources at Leicestershire Police.

The Panel then questioned Mr. Dawkins regarding his suitability for the post under the following key headings:

- Professional Competence;
- Personal Independence.

Arising from questioning, the Panel noted the following points made by Mr. Dawkins:

- (i) Mr Dawkins stated that the key to a successful budget was good early engagement with key stakeholders internally and externally and understanding their needs and demands, and also knowing what the intended outcomes of the budget were. With specific regard to the Police Precept, public consultation was important, overseeing internal and external audit of the budget, and making sure the reports for the Police

and Crime Panel contained the appropriate level of detail at the same time as being easily understandable for a lay person.

- (ii) One of the main challenges for the OPCC over the next few months was the outcome of the General Election and any potential impact on policing. Given the delay in the announcement of the police funding settlement caused by the General Election it would be challenging to make short term financial plans. An additional challenge was the PCC elections in May 2020 and being able to make financial decisions without knowing what the approach of the incoming PCC would be. Planning had already begun for the handover to the next PCC. There had been a transition plan for the previous handover between PCCs in Leicestershire and the experience from the previous handover would be invaluable. The candidates taking part in the 2020 PCC election would be provided a briefing and made aware of strategic and operational issues.
- (iii) Mr Dawkins accepted that when one person was carrying out both the role of Assistant Chief Officer – Finance & Resources at Leicestershire Police and the role of Chief Finance Officer at the OPCC there was potentially a conflict of interest, particularly where the PCC and Chief Constable did not have similar views on an issue, however Mr Dawkins believed that the protocol as set out in Appendix B would assist him with maintaining his political impartiality. In carrying out the two roles he would ensure that there was ‘one version of the truth’ with regards to financial matters and he would not give contradictory advice to the PCC and Chief Constable. The advice he gave would be unchanged. Mr Dawkins emphasised that although the PCC was a political figure, the role of Chief Finance Officer at the OPCC was as a financial advisor not a political advisor. His role was to provide the financial information and it was for the PCC to make the final decision on the Precept. Mr Dawkins stated that if there was trust, clarity and transparency between both offices as there had been so far then it was possible for him to carry out the two roles successfully. Mr Dawkins stated that the previous time he had carried out both roles no conflicts of interest had arisen. Mr Dawkins also reminded the Panel that external audit took place and frameworks were in place to ensure good governance and that legal requirements were adhered to.
- (iv) Mr Dawkins stated that the political aspects of the Police and Crime Plan were a matter for the PCC, not the Chief Finance Officer. The role of the Chief Finance Officer with regards to the Plan was to ensure that there was a medium term financial plan in place and that the ambitions of the PCC with regard to the Police and Crime Plan were affordable. Once the Police and Crime Plan had been finalised the Chief Finance Office would then play a role with commissioning and putting in place a robust methodology for the assessment of funding bids and the awarding of grants.
- (v) As Assistant Chief Officer – Finance & Resources for Leicestershire Police the focus was on the operational delivery of the police service whereas the Chief Finance Officer for the OPCC played a role in holding the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of the police service. A key part of the latter role was to make the PCC aware of the financial consequences of decisions and understand the impact on delivery.
- (vi) Mr Dawkins had recently attended a meeting of the Joint Audit, Risk & Assurance Panel and there were no issues of concern with regards to carrying out the two roles at that meeting. He was due to attend a meeting of the Strategic Assurance

Board and did not envisage any issues arising there either. The key to carrying out both roles was maintaining his neutrality and presenting the information and guidance in a factual way. He would not express personal views.

(Mr Dawkins left the room.)

37. Exclusion of Press and Public.

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 3 and 10 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act specified below and that, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

- Panel Deliberations on the Proposed Appointment of a Chief Executive Officer.

38. Panel deliberations on the proposed appointment of a Chief Finance Officer.

The Panel, having gone into exempt session, considered the statement and answers provided by Mr Paul Dawkins to their questions, in addition to the introduction provided by the PCC and all relevant paperwork provided.

RESOLVED:

That, in light of the responses given relating to the professional competence and personal independence required of the post of Chief Finance Officer, the Panel unanimously endorses with no hesitation the PCC's appointment of Mr Paul Dawkins to the post of Chief Finance Officer.

39. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Panel would be held on 11 December 2019 at 1:00pm.

1.30 - 2.15 pm
04 November 2019

CHAIRMAN