

Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Minutes of a meeting of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel held at the Great Hall, The Guildhall, St Giles Street, Northampton NN1 1DE on Thursday 2 February 2023 at 3.15 pm.

Present:

Councillor Gill Mercer (Chair)
Councillor Andre Gonzalez De Savage (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Jon-Paul Carr
Councillor Dorothy Maxwell
Councillor David Smith
Councillor Winston Strachan
Mrs Anita Shields
Miss Pauline Woodhouse

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Adam Brown
Councillor Zoe McGhee
Councillor Russell Roberts
Councillor Ken Pritchard

Also in attendance:

Stephen Mold, Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Dr Paul Gibson, proposed candidate for appointment as the Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police
Helen King, Chief Finance Officer, Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Nicci Marzec, Director for Early Intervention, Head of Paid Service and Monitoring Officer, Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Deborah Denton, Joint Head of Communications, Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Coleen Rattigan, Chief of Staff, Northamptonshire Police
Stuart McCartney, Governance and Accountability Manager, Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Mark Jones, Chief Fire Officer, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service
James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager, West Northamptonshire Council
Diana Davies, Democratic Services Officer, West Northamptonshire Council

There was also one member of the public in attendance.

125. Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Councillors Brown, McGhee, Pritchard and Roberts and from substitute members Councillors Irwin, Jelley, Lee and Lunn.

Councillor McGhee attended the meeting remotely but the Panel was advised that she was not formally present as not in the meeting room.

126. **Notification of requests from members of the public to address the meeting**

None received.

127. **Declarations of Interest**

None declared.

128. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed Dr Paul Gibson to the meeting and Panel members introduced themselves.

129. **Proposed appointment by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire of a temporary Chief Constable**

The Chair introduced the report outlining the purpose and format of the confirmation hearing and invited Panel members to raise any questions on these matters. There were none.

The Chair then invited the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) to introduce Dr Paul Gibson as his proposed appointment as Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police. The PFCC made the following points:

- He thanked the Panel for convening the confirmation hearing to consider a proposed appointment that would support continuity of leadership at Northamptonshire Police and also take a unique opportunity to contribute to the force's ability to deliver positive outcomes for residents.
- All police forces were statutorily required to have a chief constable. The recent appointment of Nick Adderley on a new contract involved a short retirement period. To meet the statutory requirement and sustain progress during Mr Adderley's absence he proposed to appoint Dr Gibson as Chief Constable for a temporary period from 27 February to 2 April 2023.
- The role of Chief Constable clearly needed to be held by an individual with experience of delivering strategic leadership and knowledge of policing. He was delighted that Dr Gibson had agreed to this opportunity.
- Dr Gibson had over 20 years of strategic operational experience. He was currently the regional Deputy Chief Constable for the East Midlands responsible for providing specialist operational support to Northamptonshire. He had previously served as Deputy Chief Constable and Assistant Chief Constable with Derbyshire Police and was also the national police lead for digital forensics.
- Dr Gibson was a highly effective and widely respected senior officer with significant professional experience. As PFCC he was fortunate to be able to propose Dr Gibson for the appointment, which would produce a benefit to Northamptonshire.

The Panel then asked Dr Gibson a series of questions relating to his professional competence and personal independence.

Dr Gibson was asked what particularly attracted him to the opportunity to serve as Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police for a temporary period. Dr Gibson made the following points:

- As the operational lead for the East Midlands Specialist Operations Unit (EMSOU) he had an established working relationship with the PFCC and with Nick Adderley and direct experience of delivering policing in Northamptonshire.
- He believed that there was an opportunity for him to make a difference as the Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police even for a short period. He could contribute to the continuing development of the force by bringing a fresh perspective informed by 24 years' overall experience in policing including seven years at executive level.
- If appointed to the role he would focus on some specific objectives. He would carry out a peer review of the force's development journey, consider the progress made against HMCIFRS improvement areas, and give a view on culture and leadership. In the process he would also be able to strengthen the relationship between the force and EMSOU.

Dr Gibson was asked what he saw as the main challenges currently facing Northamptonshire Police and what he would take from his previous professional experience to enable him to contribute to addressing these challenges effectively. Dr Gibson made the following points:

- Northamptonshire Police faced various challenges that applied to policing in general. Forces were operating in a post-trust world involving a loss of confidence amongst members of the public. They had to deal with new types of crime arising from the greater links between physical and virtual worlds and the demands of crime such as modern slavery and child sexual exploitation that might not be visible to the public. Challenges relating to recruitment and retention of police officers and the structural funding for policing were also common to all.
- If appointed as Chief Constable he would work with the PFCC to seek better funding for Northamptonshire but also to use available resources as effectively as possible. This should be based on a strategic planning cycle that was informed by public priorities and directed the activity of the whole organisation towards agreed outcomes. Services should be transformed where this would enable them to operate more efficiently, including making use of good practice in other force areas and other sectors.
- Northamptonshire Police also needed to ensure that it had a good understanding of its staff members' capabilities and how to support them to fulfil their potential. The peer review work he could carry out would help to enhance the force's future trajectory in this respect.

Dr Gibson was asked what he saw as the key factors in enabling Northamptonshire Police to operate as effectively as possible in a demanding financial environment and how he would seek to address these. Dr Gibson made the following points:

- When he had served with Lincolnshire Police the force had faced significant funding pressures and he had been involved in making a case to the government for additional resources, similarly to the current situation in Northamptonshire.

- At the same time, working in a tight financial environment added to the importance of having a clear vision and strategy. Staff members should be able to contribute to shaping this and should then commit to delivering it. The chief constable should embody the overall direction and ethos of their force. Organisations that were able to apply the principle of servant leadership ended up stronger overall.
- A force's financial planning cycle should ensure that services were tailored to its financial envelope, informed by a sound understanding of demand. He had experience of using priority-based budgeting with EMSOU.
- Police forces operated with the consent of the public and in using resources faced the challenge of meeting high public expectations about local services. This should be reflected and addressed by taking an open and transparent approach, including explaining if something went wrong.

Dr Gibson was asked to give an example of when he had moved into a new role or organisation at a strategic level and quickly needed to understand its character and ways of working in order to inform him in exercising his responsibilities, the approach he had taken and how effective this had been. Dr Gibson made the following points:

- His professional career included experience of taking on senior roles with three different police forces and serving as a national lead for particular policing functions.
- His approach to assuming a new role involved three phases: listening and learning; moving to clarify; and setting high expectations. At the first stage he would not claim to know everything about a subject or role but would seek to engage with staff members and other stakeholders to understand an organisation, its priorities and how the key issues affecting it might be addressed. The second phase involved using this information to form a plan that set a clear direction, outcomes and the role of staff members in delivering these. Staff members should be empowered to take responsibility, to innovate and to get things wrong in the process if necessary. Ultimately, a leader should support people to fulfil their potential but also be able to identify alternatives if they did not meet expectations.
- As Deputy Chief Constable at Derbyshire Police he had worked on implementing a £2m increase in the police precept by the Police and Crime commissioner. This had involved carrying out a significant programme of public consultation to understand local priorities and then showing how this had informed action taken. The outcomes of this process had included implementing increases in neighbourhood policing in a short space of time.

Dr Gibson was asked how he would seek to strike the right balance between making a mark as the Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police for a temporary period and supporting the long term direction and priorities for the force set by the PFCC and Nick Adderley. Dr Gibson made the following points:

- As Chief Constable he would need to work in support of the PFCC's Police, Fire and Crime Plan and other aspects of the long term vision and priorities set by the PFCC and Nick Adderley. Northamptonshire Police was on a positive trajectory as demonstrated by recent crime statistics.

- At the same time, he could help to enhance the continuing development of the force by bringing a different perspective and focussing on the specific areas already highlighted at the meeting, including work relating to HMICFRS inspection and relationships with partners.

Dr Gibson was asked how as Chief Constable he would seek to ensure that Northamptonshire Police inspired the highest possible levels of trust and confidence amongst members of the public, reflecting current national concerns about standards in policing. Dr Gibson made the following points:

- All shared the concerns about the significant problems that had been identified at the Metropolitan Police and other forces, which included examples of abhorrent behaviour.
- Members of the public were crucial to the way that the police operated as sources of intelligence. If the police lost the confidence of the public it made effective policing harder.
- The chief constable should seek to set the right tone and values for their force, which in his case were centred on public service and duty. They should then ensure that these were reflected through the organisation by recruiting and retaining the right people.
- As a senior leader at Derbyshire Police he had worked to achieve the target set by the Chief Constable of communicating with 50 per cent of households in the force area. The force's approach had involved being open about policing, dispelling myths but also accepting if it had got something wrong.
- Neighbourhood policing provided a proactive way of engaging with local residents. The force should take a professional approach that was well-informed about local areas and their priorities and be held to account for the results it produced.
- An increased focus on domestic violence and violence against women and girls should include seeking feedback from people affected by these crimes about how well they had been served.
- Quicker vetting of new recruits, investigation of behaviour by police officers that indicated a cause for concern, and removal of individuals from service where necessary would all help to improve public confidence in the police.

Dr Gibson was asked what approach he would take to leading Northamptonshire Police's involvement in partnership working during his period as Chief Constable. Dr Gibson made the following points:

- Partnership working was central to his current role with EMSOU in which he worked to five different chief constables and Police and Crime commissioners. Work by EMSOU also demonstrated the added value that could result from organisations working together effectively. For example, he considered that EMSOU delivered exemplary homicide and scenes of crime functions for the region.
- An increasing local focus in policing could cause forces to reduce their involvement in wider partnerships. He did not agree with this approach and was a strong believer in taking opportunities to collaborate whenever they produced a

benefit to the public. He had previous professional experience of place-based service delivery models, integrated offender management and close working between the police and Fire and Rescue service.

- If appointed as Chief Constable he would aim to give constructive feedback about the operation of partnership working in Northamptonshire.

Dr Gibson was asked how he would seek to work with the PFCC to reflect that the PFCC and the Chief Constable had distinct responsibilities but must also work well as a team in the interests of Northamptonshire. Dr Gibson made the following points:

- The Policing Protocol clearly set out the respective responsibilities of the PFCC and the Chief Constable, with good reason given the importance of the Chief Constable having operational independence. However, the two also needed to work together effectively in practice within these parameters.
- As Chief Constable he would always seek to have a constructive relationship with the PFCC that would support the delivery of the best outcomes for Northamptonshire residents. This relationship should be professional, should allow for disagreement and should ultimately reflect that the PFCC held to account the Chief Constable. Good team working between the PFCC and the Chief Constable should be based on trust, positive conflict, accountability, oversight of performance and results.
- His previous experience of working with the PFCC gave him confidence that, if appointed, they would both be working towards the same aims from the perspective of their respective roles.

Dr Gibson was asked what key principles he would seek to apply as the operational leader of Northamptonshire Police in order to inspire confidence and respect in his leadership amongst staff members. Dr Gibson made the following points:

- Leadership should be about getting the best from people by enabling them to feel that they were given direction, would be supported to carry out their role and would be held to account for what they delivered.
- There were significant challenges in policing relating to motivation and retention that were not subject to simple answers. However, a chief constable should set the tone for their force. Key elements of his approach included compassion, welfare and wellbeing, continuous professional development and reward and recognition. In his current role he sent out several thank-you cards a day recognising good work by staff members.
- Wellbeing was a by-product of good leadership. Leaders should be selected and developed to bring the right values and reflect the tone set by the chief constable.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion were part of creating a working environment in which people felt psychologically safe to be themselves. He believed that he had a track record of delivery in this regard.

Dr Gibson was asked what relationship he thought the Chief Constable should have with the Panel given the respective roles of the Panel and the PFCC and also how as Chief Constable he would engage with the large number of village communities in Northamptonshire. Dr Gibson made the following points:

- The same principles applied as to the relationship between the PFCC and the Chief Constable. He would seek to have a professional, constructive relationship with the Panel based on constructive debate, reflecting the Panel's role.
- He had previously been asked to deliver a briefing to the Panel on the work of EMSOU and would welcome the opportunity to do so.
- He came from a rural county and understood the challenges of maintaining a police presence in different communities. He could not promise to deploy officers at set times and it would be important to communicate with residents about the approach the force was taking and what it was and was not in a position to do. The force needed to have a good understanding of priorities within different communities. In turn, effective neighbourhood policing would help to build resilient communities.

Dr Gibson was asked what he would most like to achieve during his period as Chief Constable if appointed. Dr Gibson made the following points:

- He would aim to take a whole-hearted approach to the role and to engage with those delivering frontline services in the county. He would also particularly focus on working with the lead officers for the forthcoming HMICFRS inspection.
- He could help to remove issues that might be preventing individuals from fulfilling their potential, making use of his experience in coaching.
- He could help to strengthen further the working relationship between Northamptonshire Police and EMSOU.

The Chair invited Dr Gibson to raise any questions that he wished to ask the Panel or further comments that he wished to make. Dr Gibson had no questions but thanked the Panel for its time and hoped to see members again, subject to the outcome of the confirmation hearing.

The Chair welcomed that Dr Gibson had referred to providing further information to the Panel on the work of EMSOU. This was an area of interest to the Panel and it would like to hear from Dr Gibson on this matter in future.

130. **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

131. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

The Chair requested the Panel to agree that the remainder of the meeting be held in private session.

RESOLVED that: under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that if the public and press were present it would be likely that exempt information under Part 1 Paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act would be disclosed to them.

The remainder of the meeting took place in private session.

132. **Report and recommendation to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire on the proposed appointment of a temporary Chief Constable**

The Panel considered its report and recommendation on the proposed appointment.

At the conclusion of discussion the Chair invited the Panel to reach a resolution on the proposed appointment.

RESOLVED that: the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel recommends that the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire appoints Dr Paul Gibson as the Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police for the period from 27 February 2023 to 2 April 2023 inclusive.

The meeting closed at 4.30 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____