

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL
REPORT TO THE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER
FOR NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

28 JULY 2023

Report Title	Review of the proposed appointment by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire of an interim Chief Fire Officer.
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The report is intended to set out the results of the review by the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire’s proposed appointment of an interim Chief Fire Officer.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire is responsible for appointing the Chief Fire Officer for Northamptonshire. When the Commissioner proposes to make an appointment to this position the Police, Fire and Crime Panel must hold a confirmation hearing to review the proposed appointment in order to make a recommendation on it. This report sets out the result of a confirmation hearing held by the Panel on 27 July 2023 concerning the proposed appointment of Mr Simon Tuhill as interim Chief Fire Officer.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel recommends:
- a) That the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire appoints Mr Simon Tuhill as the interim Chief Fire Officer for Northamptonshire.
 - b) That the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner notifies the Panel of his decision whether to accept or reject its recommendation in accordance with the Fire and Rescue Authority (Police and Crime Commissioner) (Application of Local Policing Provisions, Inspection, Powers to Trade and Consequential Amendments) Order 2017 part 2 chapter 1 paragraph 9(3).

- 3.2 Reasons for Recommendation(s) – The recommendations are required to complete the Panel’s review of the proposed appointment by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner of a Chief Fire Officer, in accordance with the Panel’s statutory responsibilities.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 The Policing and Crime Act 2017 makes provision for a Police and Crime Commissioner for an area to be the fire and rescue authority for that area. This position has applied in Northamptonshire from 1 January 2019. The responsibilities of a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) created under the 2017 Act include the functions of appointing, suspending or dismissing the chief fire officer.
- 4.2 The Fire and Rescue Authority (Police and Crime Commissioner) (Application of Local Policing Provisions, Inspection, Powers to Trade and Consequential Amendments) Order 2017 part 2 chapter 1 specifies that a PFCC must notify the relevant Police, Fire and Crime Panel of the proposed appointment of a chief fire officer. In such cases the PFCC must also notify the Police, Fire and Crime Panel of the following information:
- a) the name of the person whom the PFCC is proposing to appoint (“the candidate”);
 - b) the criteria used to assess the suitability of the candidate for the appointment;
 - c) why the candidate satisfies those criteria; and
 - d) the terms and conditions on which the candidate is to be appointed.
- 4.3 The Police, Fire and Crime Panel must review the proposed appointment at a confirmation hearing. A confirmation hearing is defined as: “A meeting of the Panel, held in public, at which the candidate is requested to appear for the purpose of answering questions relating to the appointment.”
- 4.4 The Police, Fire and Crime Panel must then make a report to the PFCC stating the outcome of the review. In the case of the proposed appointment of a chief fire officer the Panel must make a recommendation as to whether or not the candidate should be appointed. Alternatively, the Panel may resolve to veto the proposed appointment, if at least two-thirds of the people who are members of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel at the time vote in favour of making that decision.
- 4.5 The PFCC may accept or reject the Police, Fire and Crime Panel's recommendation as to whether or not the candidate should be appointed. The PFCC must notify the Panel of their decision on the Panel’s recommendation. In the event that the Panel vetoes the PFCC’s proposed appointment the PFCC must not appoint that candidate. The PFCC must then propose a reserve candidate, whose appointment will be subject to review at a further confirmation hearing.
- 4.6 The Police, Fire and Crime Panel must publish its report to the PFCC, although it is for the Panel to decide the manner in which the report is published.

5. Review of the proposed appointment of an interim Chief Fire Officer

- 5.1 The Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel met in public on 27 July 2023 to hold a confirmation hearing for the proposed appointment of Mr Simon Tuhill as interim Chief Fire Officer for Northamptonshire. The proposed appointment followed the departure of the previous post holder on 7 July 2023 and is intended to cover the period to the conclusion of the recruitment process for their permanent successor. Mr Tuhill's substantive position is Deputy Chief Fire Officer for Northamptonshire.
- 5.2 The Panel was provided with information about the proposed appointment ahead of the confirmation hearing. This included the information referred to in paragraph 4.2 above.
- 5.3 At the confirmation hearing the Panel asked questions of Mr Tuhill, intended to enable Panel members to evaluate his suitability for the role. In accordance with relevant guidance these questions focussed on the areas of professional competence (: the candidate's ability to carry out the role) and personal independence (: the need for the candidate to act in a manner that is operationally independent of the PFCC). The questions covered the following areas:
- Mr Tuhill's response to the opportunity to serve as Chief Fire Officer for an interim period and his priorities during this time.
 - Perceptions of the main challenges facing Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service and how these could be addressed.
 - Approaches to improving the performance of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service and enabling it to operate as effectively as possible in a demanding financial environment.
 - Developing partnership working with other emergency services and with partner organisations in broader areas of activity.
 - Experience of leading major service transformation projects.
 - Working effectively with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner whilst respecting the distinctions between their respective responsibilities.
 - Supporting cultural transformation in Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service that enables it to develop into a fully inclusive workplace that is representative of the communities it serves.
 - Approaches to leadership that will inspire confidence and respect amongst Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service staff members.
 - Working constructively with staff representative organisations whilst delivering an appropriate level of service to the community.
 - The future working relationship between the Panel and the Chief Fire Officer.
- 5.4 The confirmation hearing was webcast live and the recording is available to view at the following link: [West Northamptonshire Council - YouTube](#).

6. Outcome of the Review

- 6.1 After questioning Mr Tuhill and taking account of the other information provided to the Panel, members endorsed his suitability for the proposed appointment. Members recognised that Mr Tuhill would be coming into the role of interim Chief Fire Officer at a challenging time but felt that he was an excellent candidate to do so. Members noted that Mr Tuhill's professional record included tremendous operational experience. Members felt that his answers to the Panel's questions had been clear, focussed and inspiring and gave further confidence in his capability: Mr Tuhill's stated commitment to partnership working and to constructive two-way communication with staff members were particularly highlighted. Members were satisfied that Mr Tuhill met the criteria in the person specification for the role. Members acknowledged that Mr Tuhill had stated that he felt honoured to be given the opportunity to lead Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service for an interim period. In turn, members felt that he would serve Northamptonshire well in the role.
- 6.2 At the conclusion of discussion the Panel resolved unanimously:

To recommend that the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire appoints Mr Simon Tuhill as the interim Chief Fire Officer for Northamptonshire.

7. Background Papers

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

Police and Crime Panels Guidance on Confirmation Hearings Local Government Association and Centre for Public Scrutiny (August 2012)

Policing and Crime Act 2017

Fire and Rescue Authority (Police and Crime Commissioner) (Application of Local Policing Provisions, Inspection, Powers to Trade and Consequential Amendments) Order 2017

Policing and fire governance: guidance for police and crime panels Local Government Association and Centre for Public Scrutiny (July 2019)