



Formal notification to the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel of the proposed appointment to the position of Interim Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) as required under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 After receiving notification of Helen King's retirement as Chief Finance Officer/Section 151 Officer we want to recruit someone with the skills and experience to undertake this statutory role, as specified within the Police Reform Act and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (the Act), to ensure that we continue to press forward with the work of the Office. This person will hold the responsibilities of Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer (as defined in the Local Government Act 1972) and will undertake these important functions until the role is advertised and a new Chief Executive is appointed.
- 1.2 The Police, Fire and Crime Panel (the Panel) is required to undertake a confirmation hearing to review and confirm the appointment of a Chief Finance Officer. The same process is followed for interim appointments.
- 1.3 In line with provision in Schedule 1(9) of the Act (*Scrutiny of Senior Appointments*) the Commissioner must inform the Panel of the following information:
 - a) The name of the person whom the commissioner 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.
- 1.4 The Act also sets out the Panel's responsibility to review the proposed appointment and make a report to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner within a period of three weeks from when the Panel received notification from the Commissioner of the proposed appointment, including a recommendation as to whether or not the candidate should be appointed.
- 1.5 The Panel must hold a public confirmation hearing before making a report and recommendation to the Commissioner in relation to a proposed senior appointment. At this meeting the candidate is requested to appear to answer any questions relating to the appointment.

- 1.6 The Panel may, having reviewed the proposed appointment, either recommend approval or refusal of the appointment. (It should be noted this is a slightly different process to that for the appointment of Chief Constables and Chief Fire Officers', where an option to veto an appointment by a two thirds majority is also open to the Panel.)
- 1.7 If the Panel supports the proposed appointment, the candidate is then confirmed in role. Should the Panel choose to recommend refusal of the proposed appointment, the Commissioner may accept or reject such a recommendation, and must notify the Panel of his response.

2. The Proposed Appointment

- 2.1 Given the urgency of the need to ensure that this statutory role is undertaken, I propose Vaughan Ashcroft for the role on an interim basis until after the PFCC elections in May 2024.
- 2.2 Vaughan is a strategic finance professional with considerable experience of all aspects of policing and fire financial arrangements, accounting and strategic planning, including 5 years at the most senior level of financial management. He is currently the Chief Finance Officer for the Chief Constable.
- 2.3 Vaughan will be well known to members of the Police Fire and Crime Panel as he currently acts as Deputy PFCC 151 officer, deputising for Helen. He has formally undertaken the deputy role since the joint finance team was established in 2020.
- 2.4 With his extensive knowledge of the business, and key players within it, Vaughan will be able to hit the ground running and steer a course through the budget and precept processes for both police and fire partners.
- 2.5 A key essential criterion for the role is experience of acting as a section 151 officer. As Vaughan is the only person within the organisation with this specific experience, coupled with the fact the fact that he currently acts as Deputy 151 officer, expressions of interest from within the organisation were not sought.
- 2.6 In order to undertake the role Vaughan will step aside from his current role and responsibilities as the Police section 151 officer to prevent any potential conflicts of interest.

3. The terms and conditions on which the proposed candidate will be appointed

- 3.1 I have considered the salary band for the Chief Finance Officer role and I am proposing that it is at a salary equivalent of £110,000 per annum.
- 3.2 As this is a temporary role Vaughan will be seconded into the office and will retain all the employment rights and entitlements accrued in his current, substantive role.
- 3.3 It is my intention that the role will commence on 22nd December.

3.4 Due to the significant financial workload arising through the budget and precept process at the start of the calendar year, and the forthcoming PFCC elections due in May 2024 I am proposing that this role remains interim until after the election, at which point whoever is the PFCC for Northamptonshire will be able to make a substantive appointment. I will, however, ensure all the preparatory work for a recruitment process is completed to prevent unnecessary delays post-election.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 With the exception of a few days in December 2023, this is cost neutral.

5. Recommendation

5.1 The Panel is requested to review and confirm the appointment of Vaughan Ashcroft to the position of Chief Finance Officer for the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire as set out above.

Stephen Mold

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire

Appendix A – Job Description of Chief Finance Officer

Appendix B – Vaughan Ashcroft's Curriculum Vitae

Appendix A

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE OFFICE OF THE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE: Chief Finance Officer to The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) and Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (NCFRA).

SCALE: Spot Salary

SUPERVISION AND CONTROL: Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

PLACE OF WORK: Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

HOURS OF WORK: 37

PURPOSE OF THE JOB:

To exercise the statutorily defined responsibilities for all financial affairs and have accountability for the financial probity for the two organisations of:

- Policing – for the Office of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC); and
- Fire – for Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (NCFRA)

To exercise the statutory arrangements for proper financial administration and governance as set out within the statutory responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act, the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Local Government Act 2003 and other relevant legislation.

To deliver the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's key corporate and partnership priorities.

To be the principal policy adviser to the PFCC on matters relevant to portfolio.

To ensure effective use of resources through the Corporate management Team and wider workforce.

Ensure the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority have appropriate and effective decision making processes in line with the principles of good governance.

Ensure effective risk and performance management to provide assurance that the OPFCC is meeting its aims and complies with financial and legislative requirements in line with core values.

Act as an advocate for the PFCC and NCFRA at a local, regional and national level.

MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES:

Director Responsibilities

1. To lead strategically across the development and delivery of policy and practice, creating and implementing the content of the Commissioner's programme.
2. To provide strategic direction and financial advice and challenge to the Commissioner in fulfilling his functions and providing professional leadership, responsibility and management of the overall budget, strategy and operational framework for the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and the Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority.
3. Discharge fully responsibilities delegated by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner in discharging his responsibilities in accordance with the provisions of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.
4. To represent the PFCC across executive, senior stakeholder and governmental relationships. To secure effective and highly productive relationships with key partner agencies, including local government and wider public services.
5. Influence a range of policy makers, public bodies, partners and suppliers to ensure NCFRA and the PFCC are well positioned to meet existing objectives and new challenges.
6. To be the key adviser to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, on key areas of policy and practice and lead on the development and delivery of strategy and plans within scope of portfolio.
7. To communicate at an executive level with senior stakeholders within and beyond the County, forging high-level relationships, fostering strategic partnerships, influencing key investment and policy decisions and enhancing the reputation and influence of the OPFCC and NCFRA. Ensure that both NCFRA and the OPFCC significantly contribute to national considerations concerning fire, policing and public safety;
8. Lead on the design, development and delivery of strategies relevant to portfolio, working collaboratively with key partners across the police force, fire and other organisations;
9. Provide strategic advice to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner in fields relevant to portfolio, ensuring latest developments in national and international policy and practice inform local thinking;
10. Engage with partners across fire, policing, justice and third sector organisations to develop innovative approaches to service delivery and to seek funding to support new initiatives;
11. To deputise for the other Directors and to formally represent the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, as required.

Statutory Responsibilities:

1. Discharge fully the responsibilities of the Section 151 Officer for the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC) Policing Group, (including any companies, charities or joint ventures within the group) in accordance with the responsibilities under the Local Government Act s.151 and the Police, Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.
2. Discharge fully the responsibilities of the Section 151 Officer for Northamptonshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority (NCFRA) in accordance with the responsibilities under the Local Government Act s.151 and the Police, Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011
3. Discharge fully the Duty of Best Value responsibilities as set out in Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 (as amended by s137 of the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007).
4. For both NCFRA and Policing: discharge the financial strategies, budget negotiations and all statutory and public financial engagement, ensuring financial legislation is complied with.
5. In conjunction with the monitoring officer to ensure compliance with the requirements of all statutory, legislative and financial frameworks.
6. Ensure propriety in the conduct of the Commissioner's business, including making proper arrangements and governance for contracts and tendering procedures.
7. Discharge professional leadership of Police and NCFRA finance functions to ensure both services have the capacity to deliver current and future priorities in accordance with relevant government legislation, professional standards and leading edge practices.
8. For both NCFRA and Policing, ensure appropriate financial standards and processes are in place.
9. Ensure the PFCC and NCFRA interests are represented in regard to the Northamptonshire Pension Fund, the Police and the Firefighters Pension Fund.
10. As the statutory officer charged with governance, lead the Policing, NCFRA and public sector companies engagement with external and internal auditors and discharge those responsibilities at the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC).

This post has been identified as being politically restricted under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 as amended by the Local Democracy, Economic, Development and Construction Act 2009.

ROLE SPECIFIC ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

Qualifications:

1. To hold a Management qualification or degree and significant experience in organisational leadership.
2. To evidence previous experience working as a Chief Officer and Section 151 Officer in large and complex organisations;
3. Qualified CCAB (Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies).
4. Membership of one or more professional bodies as set out in s.113 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.
5. Evidence of continuing professional development.

Background and Experience:

6. Substantial knowledge and experience of leading financial planning, budget preparation and control, financial risk assessment, management and resolution, statutory accounting, and financial systems and control across more than one large and complex organisation
7. Proven experience of providing strategic financial and policy advice and challenge to senior and political leaders.
8. Experience and success in:
 - a. Promoting, leading and influencing high performing, professional teams
 - b. Effective partnership working and collaboration; developing and maintaining positive and productive relationships with a range of internal and external stakeholders and strategic partners.
 - c. Driving cultural change and organisational vision and values.
 - d. Operating in a political environment, providing professional advice and guidance to and building effective working relationships with senior managers, government officials and elected members.
 - e. Developing strategic policies and plans.

Skills/Knowledge

9. Excellent current working knowledge and understanding of police, fire and local government law, practice and statutory requirements.

10. Thorough understanding of the current issues and future challenges facing the sector and their impact across a range of policing and fire services,

11. Demonstrable leadership skills; specifically the ability to “take people” with you and promote organisational vision and values.

12. Effective interpersonal and communication skills, with ability to engage a range of audiences and positively represent the PFCC and NCFRA,

13. Ability to see the big picture, interpret it and develop relevant strategies, plans and deliverables.

14. Ability to encourage and engender collaborative working and build positive relationships with external agencies, partners and internal and external stakeholders.

15. Political awareness and the ability to work successfully within a political environment through effective working relationships.

16. Ability to challenge others constructively and to make informed decisions that if challenged can be substantiated.

17. Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, including strong report writing and presentation skills.

18. Ability to learn from experience and to share that learning through future actions to improve service delivery and performance.

19. Strong management skills, with ability to lead and influence others, make informed decisions and build and maintain successful relationships and networks.

20. Strong influencing and negotiating skills.

21. Strong financial and budget management skills.

22. Highly developed analytical and problem-solving skills, able to work strategically and apply sound judgement.

Personal Qualities

23. Passionate about providing services to the community.

24. Positive role model for behaviours and culture.

25. Collaborative and strategic leader – able to motivate and work across boundaries and achieve performance/results through others.

26. Sound judgement in devising and evaluating options and dealing with complex issues.
27. Demonstrable evidence of policy judgement, political awareness and astuteness
28. Robust and resilient, with drive and self-motivation.
29. Commercially / financially astute and client focussed.
30. Innovative, with a 'can do' attitude.
31. Flexible and able to meet competing demands and challenging circumstances.
32. Ability to work under pressure and work at pace to achieve priorities.
33. Personality and credibility that engages and commands the confidence of all stakeholders.
34. Building rapport and relationships with ease and quickly gaining trust.
35. Ethical, accountable behaviour including a personal commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity.

Appendix B

VAUGHAN ASHCROFT BA (Hons) FCCA

[Personal Contact Details Redacted]

A strategic finance professional with considerable experience of all aspects of policing and fire financial arrangements, accounting and strategic planning.

Experience in leading and motivating large teams, managing change and driving tangible performance improvements, with a focus on good governance and customer service.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Chief Finance Officer – Northamptonshire Police

June 2020 – Present

- The Chief Constable's chief financial advisor and Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer) and active member of the executive team.
- Responsibility for the Enabling Services Joint Finance function with responsibility for budgeting, payroll, statutory reporting, continuous improvement and value for money.
- Responsibility for all S151 financial arrangements for the Force, ensuring sound internal control processes are in place, appropriate financial and management accounting arrangements and systems are embedded.
- Leading the finance workstream following exit from the multi-force collaboration and transfer of Fire governance to successfully build a joint finance function, which has delivered a significant improvement in performance and confidence across the police, fire and PFCC organisations.
- Development and delivery of the budget strategy and medium term financial plan, working closely with the PFCC S151 to ensure a joined up, cohesive and effective financial planning and reporting framework.
- Preparing and presenting regular reports and advice at key meetings including the Force Executive Board, Strategic Planning Board, Joint Independent Audit Committee and Accountability Board.
- Challenging and scrutinising plans and proposals submitted by Chief Officers, providing professional scrutiny, advice and recommendations.
- Ensuring the timely delivery of statutory documents such as the Statement of Accounts and achieving unqualified audit opinions. Establishing and maintaining a professional working relationship with internal and external auditors.

Head of Finance – Northamptonshire Police

May 2018 – May 2020

- Management, review and development of the financial management and internal controls of the Force to ensure financial governance, proper use of public funds and the management of risk.

- Provision of high-level financial advice to Chief Officers and Senior Managers in relation to financial strategy and management, investment decisions, prudential code issues and best financial and procurement practice. To lead the Finance Department in support of delivering the Force's vision.
- Supporting the development of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and financial strategies in order to inform effective decision making in a Value-for-Money context.
- Leading considerable improvements to budget management practices, development of strategies and increasing the profile and efficiency of the finance function.

Strategic Management Accountant – Leicestershire Police

Apr 2015 – May 2018

- Responsibility for ensuring the effective & efficient use of the Force's financial resources and to provide pro-active financial support and guidance to budget holders for the financial management of their delegated budgets.
- Oversight of the management accounting function with responsibility for budgeting strategy and medium term financial planning.
- Development of budgeting strategies – improving confidence in medium term financial planning.

Financial Management Accountant – Leicestershire Police

2010 – 2015

Finance Officer – Leicestershire Police

2007 – 2010

Transport Administrator – Leicestershire Police

2002 – 2007

EDUCATION

FCCA (Fellow of the Association of Certified Chartered Accountants) – Qualified 2009

BA (Hons) Media Studies and Music Technology (2:1), De Montfort University, Leicester – 2002

A-Level – 1999

Mathematics (A), Film Studies (A), Music (B), General Studies (B)

AS-Level – 1999

Further Mathematics (B)

GCSE – 1997

Media Studies (A*), Mathematics (A), English Literature (A), English Language (A), Science Double Award (AA), Music (A), Integrated Humanities (B)

PERSONAL INTERESTS

In my free time I enjoy the theatre, baking, socialising and keeping fit. I am an active member of local amateur theatre groups both on stage and behind the scenes, as treasurer and chairman on a voluntary basis.

REFERENCES

[Personal Contact Details Redacted]

Helen King, [former] Chief Finance Officer (S151) Northamptonshire Police Fire & Crime Commissioner

Paul Bullen, Assistant Chief Officer, Northamptonshire Police & Fire

Paul Dawkins, Assistant Chief Officer, Leicestershire Police