

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL

6 FEBRUARY 2024

Report Title	Arrangements to recruit independent co-opted members of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel
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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel independent co-opted member person specification and role description

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The report is intended to enable the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel to consider and agree proposed arrangements to recruit independent co-opted members to serve on the Panel from 2024 to 2028.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The membership of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel consists of 10 councillor members and up to three independent co-opted members recruited from the community. The two serving independent co-opted members of the Panel were appointed in 2020 for a four-year term. It is therefore necessary for arrangements to be made to recruit new independent co-opted members to join the Panel from the start of 2024/25. The report invites the Panel to consider and agree proposed arrangements for this purpose, including identifying a sub group of three councillor members of the Panel to participate in the selection process.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel:
- a) Endorses the proposed approach to the recruitment of independent co-opted members to serve on the Panel from 2024/25 set out in the report.
 - b) Identifies three councillor members of the Panel to make up a sub group to participate in the recruitment of independent co-opted members to serve on the Panel from 2024/25.
- 3.2 Reasons for Recommendation(s) – The recommendations are intended to support the recruitment of independent co-opted members to serve on the Panel from 2024 to 2028, in accordance with statutory requirements relating to the membership of the Panel.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 Schedule 6 Part 2 Paragraph 4 requires that the membership of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel (the Panel) must consist of:
- a) 10 councillors drawn from the local authorities in the Northamptonshire Police area; and
 - b) 2 independent members co-opted by the Panel
- 4.2 Panels may increase their number of independent co-opted members provided that this is approved by the Secretary of State. The Panel agreed in July 2016 that it would be beneficial to increase the number of independent co-opted members to three. It received the necessary approval to do so and the Panel has since operated on this basis.
- 4.3 The co-option of independent members is intended to assist in supporting the aim that the membership of a Police, Fire and Crime panel, when taken as a whole, has the skills, knowledge and experience necessary to enable the panel to carry out its functions effectively.
- 4.4 The existing Panel Arrangements for the Panel include the following provisions concerning the appointment of independent members:

Independent members shall be co-opted to the Panel to serve for a term of four years.

The Panel shall put in place arrangements to ensure that appointments of co-opted members are undertaken following public advertisement in accordance with the following principles:

- a) *Appointments will be made on merit of candidates whose competencies, skills, knowledge and experience are considered the best match to a role profile intended to support the Panel in discharging its functions effectively;*
- b) *The appointment process must be fair, objective, impartial and consistently applied to all candidates who will be assessed against the same pre-determined criteria; and,*
- c) *The appointment process will be conducted transparently with information about the requirements for the appointment and the process being publicly advertised and made available with a view to attracting a strong field of candidates.*

Co-opted members who have been appointed to the Panel may seek re-appointment for a second term of four years.

4.5 The serving independent co-opted members of the Panel are Mrs Anita Shields and Miss Pauline Woodhouse (a third independent co-opted member who was appointed at the same time subsequently resigned). Both were appointed to the Panel on 16 July 2020 to serve for a four-year term: formally their appointments run to the day before the date of the first Panel meeting in the 2024/25 municipal year. Mrs Shields served a previous term on the Panel from 2016 to 2020; Miss Woodhouse was newly appointed in 2020. The forthcoming completion of their terms therefore requires the Panel to carry out a recruitment exercise, to enable the Panel to co-opt independent members to serve from 2024 to 2028.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1 The Panel has carried out recruitment exercises for independent co-opted members on five previous occasions: in 2012, when the Panel was first established; in 2016 and 2020 at the scheduled completion of serving members' four year terms; and in 2014 and 2019 when individual resignations created vacancies that needed to be filled.

5.2 It is proposed that the recruitment process used in 2024 will largely be based on that used in the past, which has produced good results and which reflects the requirements in the Panel Arrangements set out in paragraph 4.4 above. The recruitment process should also take account of guidance on independent member recruitment published by the Home Office in 2023.

5.3 On this basis, the recruitment process will involve advertisement of the independent co-opted member roles, provision of application packs to potential applicants and a two-stage selection process using an application form to shortlist candidates to be invited to attend an interview. A sub group of the Panel, supported by the Panel Secretariat, will shortlist and interview candidates and recommend proposed appointments for agreement by the full Panel.

5.4 The independent co-opted member person specification and role description that will form the basis for the recruitment process is included with this report (at Appendix A). The person specification and role description were agreed by the Panel when it was first established and have subsequently been reviewed and updated when necessary.

5.5 The application pack to be provided to potential applicants will include the following types of information:

- Application form
- Independent co-opted member person specification and role description
- Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel scheme of expenses
- Links to Panel agenda papers, webcasts and further information on the role of Police, Fire and Crime commissioners and panels
- Examples of reports considered and produced by the Panel

- 5.6 Advertisement of the independent co-opted member roles will run for approximately a month and use the following methods:
- Press release by the host authority Communications Team
 - Public notice on the host authority website
 - Posts on host authority social media channel(s)
 - Requests to publicise the role sent to relevant local volunteer organisations
 - Public notice on the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner website
 - Posts on Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner social media channel(s)
 - Requests to pass on information about the role sent to all Panel members and to councillors at North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire councils
- 5.7 For reference, when recruitment was carried out in 2020 using the broad approach set out above the Panel Secretariat sent out 33 application packs; 8 applications were received; 5 applicants were interviewed; and 3 appointments were made.
- 5.8 It is anticipated that a recruitment process conducted on this basis would be carried out over two to three months in the first half of 2024 to enable recommended appointments to be presented to the Panel at its first meeting in 2024/25 (proposed to be held on 13 June 2024).

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

- 6.1.1 There are no specific resources or financial implications associated with this report. The scheduled recruitment of independent co-opted members forms part of the normal operation of the Panel. This is supported by West Northamptonshire Council, using grant funding that the Panel's host authority can claim from the Home Office for the purpose of maintaining a panel for the Northamptonshire Police area.

6.2 Legal

- 6.2.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report. The proposed arrangements for recruiting independent co-opted members are intended to reflect statutory requirements relating to the composition of panels and related guidance.

6.3 Risk

- 6.3.1 Risks could arise in connection with the recruitment of independent co-opted members of the Panel if the process followed is not open and well-managed and if it results in recommendations that do not seem justified or objective. The proposed approach set out in this report is intended to mitigate these risks by using methods that have worked effectively in the past; taking account of relevant guidance; and allowing sufficient time to run the process effectively whilst also enabling the Panel to make appointments by the necessary deadline.

7. Background Papers

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

Policing and Crime Act 2017

Police, fire and crime panels: independent member recruitment – Home Office guidance