

Report of the Independent Assessor on the Selection Process for the role of Chief Constable for Suffolk Constabulary

Introduction

- 1 This report provides information for the Police and Crime Panel (PCP) on the appointment process for the role of Chief Constable and in particular comment on,
 - how the process met the principles of merit, fairness and openness,
 - the extent to which the panel were able to fulfil their purpose i.e. to challenge and test the candidate against the criteria.

Background

- 2 Appointments to the role of Chief Constable (CC) are governed by Schedule 8 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. In making appointments Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) must comply with legal requirements and should ensure that the processes follow best practice and are underpinned by the principles that apply to public appointments:

- Merit
- Fairness
- Openness

Full guidance on chief officer appointments has been published by the National Policing College.

- 3 The key purpose of the panel is to challenge and test that the candidate meets the necessary requirements to perform the role. Under these arrangements the interview panel should include an independent member who is responsible for providing a report to the Police and Crime Panel (PCP) on the process and how it complied with the key principles and guidance. The assessor should be competent in recruitment practices and be appointed through a fair selection process. Information about my background and selection for the assessor role are set out at the annex.

Overall Process

- 4 The report by the PCC on the proposed appointment (evidence set 1) sets out full details of the steps taken at each stage of the process, including how the key documentation such as the role profile and person specification were developed and the detailed assessment process. This report therefore focuses on the key principles and how these were met.

Merit

- 5 To meet this principle the appointment process should demonstrate that "the appointee must be the candidate who best meets the agreed and published requirements of the role. It is also desirable that the successful candidate is chosen from a sufficiently strong and diverse pool of candidates".

- 6 The recruitment campaign attracted only one candidate albeit one that fully satisfied the published requirements. Whilst this would be surprising in other sectors it is less so in the context of senior police appointments where two or three is probably the norm. In addition there are a number of current or impending CC vacancies which has increased the competition for candidates and the recruitment pool itself is small. It also has to be recognised that smaller constabularies do not necessarily attract as many candidates as the larger higher profile ones. There have been at least two recent campaigns in similar sized organisations where there has been only a single applicant. In addition, the PCC tried to attract further applications from those who had expressed some interest in the post.
- 7 I have also reviewed the process to see whether there were any underlying factors that may have impacted on the response. In particular I have looked at the person specification to identify any criteria that may have unnecessarily excluded suitable applicants. All appeared to be relevant and justified, including those relating to experience, for example, "candidates should have served at least 12 months as a deputy chief constable". Whilst not all CC roles would necessarily require this level of experience, given the range of experience of the current senior management team coupled with potential future developments, the requirement for the successful candidate to have sound deputy level experience was fully justified.
- 8 Given the above and the fact that the single candidate fully met the shortlisting criteria there would have been no point in delaying the interview process in order to seek additional candidates.

Fairness

- 9 This principle requires that "The process of assessing candidates' skills and qualities against the agreed and published requirements of the role must be objective, impartial and applied consistently to all candidates".
- 10 Prior to conducting the shortlisting assessment all panel members other than myself took part in a training session provided by the Policing College which covered assessment and selection. I was unable to attend the training and shortlisting meeting but have previously been trained by the college in assessment. In addition I have reviewed all the documentation arising from the meeting including individual shortlisting record forms and the notes of the meeting itself which were comprehensive. At the presentation and interview stage all panel members fully participated and completed individual assessments of each element using the Police assessment rating scale. Scores were then shared and discussed before agreeing a common rating. There was a clear degree of consistency amongst the panel on each of the criteria with no significant variations. In my view the assessment processes at the shortlisting and selection stages fully met the fairness requirement.

Openness

- 11 The specific requirement for this principle is that "information about the requirements of the role and the appointment process must be available to all prospective candidates. The role should be advertised in a way which ensures that all those who are eligible are likely to see the advert".
- 12 In policing, chief officer vacancies are normally advertised on two websites – that of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) plus those of the home force and PCC. The advertising mechanism for the Suffolk CC post advertising followed this approach. The size and

structure of the policing community is also such that eligible officers are usually well aware of what vacancies are coming up and when they will be advertised.

- 13 The application pack was comprehensive and included all the necessary and relevant information. Prospective candidates had every opportunity to access the information and to visit the organisation to talk to the CEO of the Office of the PCC and to current senior officers and staff.

Purpose of the Appointment Panel

- 14 The process was structured to help the panel meet their remit of challenging and testing the candidate against the criteria. There were three elements to the process, first the candidate met with a selected group of selected stakeholders for a facilitated discussion on aspects of policing and issues within the community (this did not form part of the formal assessment process). The panel assessment itself consisted of two sections
 - a presentation by the candidate followed by questions
 - an interview focusing on the competence requirements of the role.
- 15 The panel were well briefed and prepared. Prior to the interview the panel had discussed what issues might be identified by the candidate in the presentation and the approach to questions. For the interview itself, questions and areas of questioning had been agreed and allocated between panel members. The panel also had the benefit of feedback from the stakeholder discussion which because of time constraints had suggested some areas that the panel might usefully probe to elicit more detailed and specific information. It is also worth noting that as chair the PCC was clear that if the candidate did not fully meet the requirements of the role then no appointment would be made.
- 16 The candidate was fully tested on all the required areas and all panel members were in agreement that Douglas Paxton clearly demonstrated that he fully met the criteria for the role.

Conclusion

- 17 I am pleased to confirm that having been fully involved in the appointments process that it:
 - met the principles of appointment on merit and that it was fair and open
 - the panel fully achieved its purpose of challenging and testing the candidate against the role requirements.

Di Newton
Independent Member

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Di Newton – Background Experience

Formerly an HR director in the public sector, I have worked for the last ten years as a consultant specialising in organisational restructuring and mergers. I am professionally qualified including Chartered Fellowship of the Institute of Personnel and Development and have qualifications in Occupational Testing. Until November 2012 I was an independent member of the Leicestershire Police Authority, lead member for HR and member of the Appointments Panel. I have been involved in the selection and appointment of a range of senior policing roles including the appointment of chief, deputy and assistant constables for Leicestershire Police Authority.

I have continued to work with the PCC and constabulary as an interim member of the Joint Audit Risk and Assurance Panel pending recruitment of the permanent members of the panel. I have a strong recruitment background coupled with wide experience of quality assuring and reporting on selection and appointment processes. I was a registered independent assessor with the Office for Commissioner of Public Appointments and worked extensively as an assessor for non executive appointments with the NHS Appointments Commission and the Welsh Assembly Government. I sit as a member for the Employment Tribunals Service in the East Midlands. I am also a lay advisor to the East Midlands Lord Chancellors Advisory Committee with responsibility for the selection and appointment of magistrates in the region. I also work as an associate assessor for the Police College on the High Potential Development Scheme (HPDS) and the senior Police National Assessment Centre (PNAC).

In December 2012, following a formal application and selection process I was appointed to the Policing College list of accredited, independent assessors.