



HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

CONFIRMATION HEARING

Thursday 25 July 2013
Stevenage Borough Council

MINUTES

Present

Cllr R Hannam, Broxbourne Borough Council (Chairman)
 Cllr M Alexander, East Herts District Council
 Cllr Mrs A Brewster, St Albans City and District Council
 Cllr J Dean, Welwyn Hatfield District Council
 Ms A Francis, Co-opted Member
 Cllr C Goldstein, Hertsmere Borough Council
 Cllr N Harden, Dacorum Borough Council
 Cllr T Hunter, North Hertfordshire District Council
 Mr I Laidlaw-Dickson, Co-opted member
 Cty Cllr P Ruffles, Hertfordshire County Council
 Cllr D Scudder, Watford Borough Council
 Cllr Ms S Taylor, Stevenage Borough Council

Also Present

Cllr Ms S Bedford (substitute), Three Rivers District Council
 Cllr A Franey (substitute), Welwyn Hatfield District Council
 Mr J Stack, Broxbourne Borough Council
 Mr G Miles, Broxbourne Borough Council
 Mr T Hewins, Broxbourne Borough Council
 Mr D Lloyd, Police and Crime Commissioner
 Mr D Gibson, proposed Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
 Mr R Wilsher, PCC Chief Executive

10 members of the public attended.

1 INTRODUCTIONS, APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

Apologies

Cllr R Seabourne, Three Rivers District Council
 Cllr S Drury, Three Rivers District Council
 Dr M Verlot, Co-opted member
 Mr J Bugg, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
 Ms D Currie, PCC Deputy Chief Executive

2 REVIEW AND CONFIRMATION HEARING OF PROPOSED APPOINTMENT OF THE DEPUTY POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The Commissioner introduced Mr Gibson to the Panel. The Commissioner explained that, after a period of reflection without a Deputy Commissioner and taking into account the recruitment processes undertaken by police and crime commissioners elsewhere in the country, the appointment of a new Deputy Commissioner was appropriate. After a robust recruitment process, which was advertised and included interviews for the position, Mr Gibson was considered the most suitable appointment. Mr Gibson is an ex BBC journalist who has worked at a senior level on cross departmental strategic issues.

Questions to the Commissioner

In relation to the legal powers of the Panel, Mr Miles confirmed that this is a senior appointment, subject to the Panel's formal review. The Panel has no veto on the appointment but the Panel is required to make a report to the Commissioner including a recommendation whether to make the appointment or not. The three weeks available expires on 7 August 2013.

Cllr Ruffles, Cllr Taylor, Cllr Scudder and Cllr Dean welcomed the openness and integrity of the recruitment process, which adhered to the Nolan principles. Following the disclosure of the fact that the Commissioner and Mr Gibson live in the same village, Cllr Ruffles asked for comment on that and reassurances that Mr Gibson has a distinct role. Cllr Scudder questioned the closeness of the Commissioner and Mr Gibson, and asked whether knowing the Commissioner was a pre-requisite of being selected for the job. The Commissioner advised that the pool of applicants was only 14 persons and, whilst each applicant offered something different, Mr Gibson offered a relevant set of skills to develop strategic partnerships and engage communities on behalf of the Commissioner.

Cllr Brewster questioned whether Mr Gibson's lack of experience with health matters, such as dealing with drug issues, was a loss, as the previous incumbent offered this capability. Cllr Harden queried whether the role of Deputy Commissioner was required and a worthwhile use of public money. The Commissioner suggested the principal reason for the appointment of the Deputy Commissioner this time was for practical purposes. For instance, the Commissioner cannot attend all meetings and was unable to attend the previous Panel meeting. Mr Gibson will offer extra assistance with the development of policy, enable the Commissioner to be more focused on the most important matters and provide a strategic presence in the office on a daily basis. The Commissioner works long hours, from circa 8am to 10.30pm each day, and the Deputy Commissioner will provide the extra capacity to fulfil all the desired functions of the office.

Cllr Taylor asked what the background and gender of the four candidates invited for interview were. The Commissioner recognised it was important to consider the rich diversity of Hertfordshire, but at the same time it was inappropriate to undertake a 'tick box' exercise. The key characteristic of the successful applicant was a candidate who could engage with diverse communities and a range of stakeholders, including at the Commissioner's monthly meetings with local authority portfolio holders. The interview

shortlist included three men, one of whom withdrew from the interview, and one woman. There were four female applicants in total.

Cllr Alexander asked whether the Commissioner was still recruiting a public relations officer. The Commissioner confirmed this was ongoing and the role was broader, encompassing engagement with the public, not just from the Commissioner's office but also from the Constabulary. Communicating the message about crime reduction is as critical as ever, as despite public perceptions Hertfordshire is a safe county to live and work in. For instance, several weeks ago there was only one crime reported in a particular day across the whole county. It would be inappropriate for the Deputy Commissioner to fulfil the communications function, as communications requires an independent role that is not a political appointment by the Commissioner. It is appropriate for communications to be across both the Commissioner's office and the Constabulary, as this relationship is not too dissimilar to a private company setup where the Commissioner is equivalent to the Chairman and the Chief Constable is equivalent to the Chief Executive. It is not the role of the Commissioner to have large amounts of staff reporting to him.

Cllr Bedford stated unawareness that the role of Deputy Commissioner was a political appointment. The Commissioner explained the term 'political' was used in the context of the role not requiring a recruitment process and that the Commissioner had complete jurisdiction to appoint a candidate directly. It was not a party political appointment.

Ms Francis queried why experience of the criminal justice system was not a prerequisite on the job description. The Commissioner suggested Mr Gibson could obtain knowledge by talking to people, particularly the probation officer seconded to the Commissioner's office, sitting in court and meeting victims of crime. A fresh perspective will be helpful.

Cllr Dean suggested in future the Commissioner could share details of candidates' CVs with the Panel to assist the process of the confirmation hearing. The Commissioner advised that the recruitment process was transparent, met the Nolan principles but that candidates were entitled to expect confidentiality in their application to the Commissioner, as would be normal. Cllr Dean recommended the qualifications of all candidates are shared with the Panel instead.

Cllr Brewster commented that colleagues at St Albans City and District Council were unaware of the Commissioner's monthly meetings with portfolio holders and need to understand the Commissioner can be scrutinised and challenged outside of Panel meetings. The Commissioner welcomed correspondence and comments can always be raised by email. The Commissioner is also undertaking a tour of council chambers so local councillors can have their say.

Questions to Mr Gibson

The Chairman asked Mr Gibson to demonstrate how he has and is able to deliver the first two 'essential skills and experience' listed in the job description produced by the Commissioner. Mr Gibson advised that he spent 12 years working at a senior level at the BBC, which included dealing with politicians and describing policy to people. Mr Gibson undertook significant changes to how the BBC delivered news across multiple media platforms. This included counteracting the silo departmental working within the

organisation and preventing the internal news teams, such as News Night and the Today Programme, competing for resources. As part of his senior role at the BBC, Mr Gibson devised and delivered a multi platform working training plan, managed complicated teams and dealt with difficult problems, such as when a news editor was arrested in Egypt. The skills can be transferred to delivering aspects of the Police and Crime Plan, by developing partnerships and listening to people.

Mr Laidlaw-Dickson questioned Mr Gibson's knowledge about policing; whether he will undertake any freelance work during his tenure as Deputy Commissioner; and whether adverse media attention to him living in the same village as the Commissioner will be an issue. Cllr Hunter reiterated that the public and media may only be concerned with the close living arrangements between Mr Gibson and the Commissioner. Mr Gibson confirmed his interest in policing as he organised the BBC's local coverage of the police and crime commissioner elections; he will undertake no freelance work; and that his living in the same village as the Commissioner should not be a barrier to his employment in the capacity of Deputy Commissioner.

Cllr Brewster queried whether Mr Gibson had any training requirements to fulfil the role. Mr Gibson commented that, whilst there is a lot to learn, there are no clear training requirements and spending time visiting and talking to people is the best solution.

3 PROPOSED APPOINTMENT OF THE DEPUTY POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER – DECISION MAKING

Cllr Taylor said that she would vote against Mr Gibson being appointed, not because he is personally inappropriate, but on the grounds that the Commissioner should not appoint a Deputy Commissioner because that person is not elected into position.

It was MOVED, SECONDED AND AGREED on a show of hands that the Panel support Mr Gibson's appointment.

Cllr Taylor, Ms Francis and Mr Laidlaw-Dickson voted against recommending the appointment of Mr Gibson.

It was indicated that these minutes will constitute the Panel's decision and report to the Commissioner.