

HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Report

Date:	15 March 2024
Title:	Confirmation Hearing for the role of Chief Finance Officer for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
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Purpose of this Report

1. This document constitutes the report and recommendations of the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Police and Crime Panel (hereafter referred to as 'the Panel') in respect of the proposed appointment of Richard Croucher to the role of Chief Finance Officer and is submitted to the Commissioner in accordance with the requirements of Paragraph 10, Schedule 1 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.
2. The Panel would like to thank Richard Croucher for his attendance at the confirmation hearing on 11 March 2024.

Recommendation

3. That Richard Croucher be confirmed in his appointment to the role of Chief Finance Officer for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Powers of the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Police and Crime Panel

4. This appointment is a permanent appointment, and therefore it is subject to the public scrutiny that is required as part of a proposed senior appointment within the meaning of Schedule 1 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.
5. The Panel have the functions conferred by Schedule 1 Part 10 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (Scrutiny of Senior Appointments). This enables them to:
 - (i) Review the proposed appointment, by holding a Confirmation Hearing within three weeks of notification being given. A 'confirmation hearing' is 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;
 - (ii) Make a report to the Commissioner on the proposed senior appointment;

(iii) Include a recommendation to the Commissioner as to whether or not the candidate should be appointed;

(iv) Publish the report to the Commissioner made under (ii).

Proceedings at the Confirmation Hearing for the role of Chief Finance Officer for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)

6. The Confirmation Hearing took place in public on Monday 11 March at 1:00pm in the Austen Room, Elizabeth II Court East, The Castle Winchester, within three weeks of notification of the proposed appointment as required.

7. Those members of the Panel present for the Confirmation Hearing were:

- Councillor Seán Woodward (Chairman) – Fareham Borough Council, Conservative
- Councillor Vivian Achwal – Winchester City Council, Liberal Democrat
- Councillor Lesley Meenaghan – Hampshire County Council, Conservative
- Councillor Luigi Gregori – Additional Local Authority Co-opted Member, Liberal Democrat
- Councillor Matthew Renyard – Southampton City Council, Labour
- Councillor Maurice Sheehan – Rushmoor Borough Council, Conservative

8. Members began by asking a number of questions of the Commissioner relating to the process followed for the appointment of the Chief Finance Officer. These were:

a) What was the driver for changing the previous arrangement to the proposed appointment?

b) What was the rationale for a joint appointment rather than employing a finance officer directly?

c) How do you ensure there is no conflict of interest when the same person is advising both the Constabulary and the Commissioner?

9. After questions to the Commissioner, the Panel asked questions of the candidate which related to his professional competence and personal independence, the answers to which enabled the Members to evaluate his suitability for the role.

Professional Competence

10. The Panel explored the candidate's ability to undertake the role through an appraisal of the supporting documents provided by the Commissioner, and through questioning. The Panel asked the following questions:

1. How does your previous experience make you well suited to this role?
2. Which qualities can you offer which makes you the best candidate for this position?

3. Have you worked for an organisation led by an elected individual before? What do you see as different about working in this environment and how would you approach this?
4. Can you provide an example where you have demonstrated your integrity and impartiality at work?
5. How would you support the PCC in holding the Chief Constable to account for efficient and effective financial management?

Personal Independence

11. The Panel explored the candidate's ability to act in a manner that is operationally independent from the Commissioner through an appraisal of the supporting documents provided, and through questioning. The Panel asked the following questions:

1. How will you ensure there is no conflict when providing advice to both the PCC and the Chief Constable?
2. Through this role how would you demonstrate to local taxpayers that you are supporting the efficient use of public funds?
3. How do you expect to engage with the Police and Crime Panel?
4. What qualities or methods would you employ to enable you to avoid political pressure when carrying out your role?

12. The Panel retired to a closed session after questions in order to agree their recommendations. The Panel agreed that if members of the press or public were present during this session, there could be disclosure to them of exempt information within Paragraph 3 of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, being information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

Conclusions

13. The Panel, through discussion and examination of the evidence in the meeting and the closed session, agreed that:

- The Police and Crime Commissioner had evidenced the benefits of a joint appointment
- The candidate demonstrated excellent relevant experience
- The candidate had an understanding of the Police and Crime Commissioner role from liaison previously as Chief Finance Officer for the Constabulary
- Suitable arrangements were in place should a conflict of interest arise between advising the Commissioner and the Chief Constable
- The candidate was clear on their statutory responsibilities and the importance of upholding those requirements

- The candidate took part in networks that provided the opportunity for learning good practice from peers

14. On the basis of the information provided by the Commissioner, and the discussions held in the Confirmation Hearing, the Panel unanimously agreed to support the appointment of the preferred candidate to the role of Chief Finance Officer for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC). The Panel did not see a need for any further recommendations at this time.

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

| Location

None