

HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Report

Date:	15 December 2023
Title:	Confirmation Hearing for the role of Chief of Staff of 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 Kate Gunson to the role of Chief of Staff 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 Kate Gunson for her attendance at the confirmation hearing on 7 December 2023.

Recommendation

3. That Kate Gunson be confirmed in her appointment to the role of Chief of Staff.

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 of Staff

6. The Confirmation Hearing took place in public on Thursday 7 December 2023 at 10:00am in the Chute Room, Elizabeth II Court South, 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 David Podger – Additional Local Authority Co-opted Member (Liberal Democrat)
8. Members began by asking a number of questions of the Commissioner relating to the process followed for the appointment of the Chief of Staff. These were:
 - a. What are the key differences between the role of the Chief of Staff and that of the previous Chief Executive?
 - b. In setting the salary for the position how did you assure yourself that it was appropriate for the level of responsibility, particularly in light of the recognised lack of executive decision-making responsibility compared to a traditional Chief Executive role?
 - Have any other Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC's) nationally taken the approach to replace the Chief Executive role with that of a Chief of Staff?
 - c. Are there any exit costs associated with the outgoing Chief Executive?
 - d. How will you demonstrate to residents how replacing the Chief Executive position with this role has delivered improvements in efficiency and effectiveness?
 - e. Can you explain how you ensured that the recruitment process for this role was robust and transparent?
 - Are you confident that the number and strength of applications received reflected the calibre of the role?
9. After questions to the Commissioner, the Panel asked questions of the candidate which related to her professional competence and personal independence, the answers to which enabled the Members to evaluate her 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. What do you think the role of the Chief of Staff is within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), and what qualities can you offer which makes you the best candidate for this position?
2. Given your experience working alongside the PCC previously, what specific skills and qualities can you bring to complement those of the PCC?
3. How would you personally ensure the robustness and transparency of the Commissioner's governance processes?
4. What do you believe should be the relationship between the Office of the PCC and the Police and Crime Panel? How would you seek to develop that relationship?
5. In undertaking this role, how would you demonstrate that you are achieving value for taxpayers' money?
6. Given your many years of experience in operational policing, how will you ensure you maintain a balanced approach in supporting delivery of both the policing priorities and those elements focussed beyond policing within the Police and Crime Plan?
 - Do you foresee any challenges in your ability to effectively lead scrutiny of Hampshire Constabulary, having served in the force for so many years?
 - How would you utilise your experience to enhance engagement between the force and the Commissioner and her office?
7. Can you provide an example of how you have improved practice or performance through effective engagement with partners?
8. Whilst your CV highlights your significant experience in managing serving officers, you have only held approximately 18 months experience in a civilian role. What would you identify as the key differences in management approach required in order to be an effective leader of civilian staff?
9. Of all the challenges ahead over the next year, which would you identify as the single most important and why?

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. What do you understand of the duties and responsibilities of the Monitoring Officer, and how would you seek to perform these duties with integrity and independence?
 2. How will you ensure a safe environment for members of staff to express their professional opinion and be heard, even when it may conflict with the views or strategy of the PCC?
 3. How would you approach a situation where the PCC proposed not to follow advice or guidance you had provided, particularly if it related to a statutory function?
 4. What does success in this role look like to you and how will you measure and demonstrate this?
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:
- A transparent recruitment process had been followed by the Commissioner, which had resulted in seventeen applications for the position from applicants with a variety of backgrounds and experience.
 - Other PCCs had already moved to a Chief of Staff model due to the growing role of the PCC, and suitable consideration had been given to salary levels at comparative force areas in setting the salary for the role.
 - The candidate provided considered and genuine responses to questions posed.
 - The confirmation hearing process had highlighted how the candidate's skillset and professional values would meet the requirements of the role.
 - The candidate evidenced skills that were complimentary to but different to the strengths of the PCC.
 - The Panel felt that the candidate's calm and measured style would be a good fit for supporting the PCC.
 - The candidate demonstrated a desire to make a difference and help make communities safer through the PCC's powers to commission prevention services and victim services.
 - The candidate had experience from within the force which would be beneficial to the role.
 - The candidate demonstrated cognisance of the financial challenges facing the public sector and the potential impact this could have on services that play a role in prevention of crime & disorder.

- When working with the PCC in her current capacity, the candidate had demonstrated a collaborative approach to partnership working. This approach would be useful for continued relationship building with stakeholders in the Chief of Staff role.
- The candidate had significant understanding of operational policing, following over 20 years as a serving officer, including as a Detective Chief Inspector. During this time the candidate had held leadership roles including relating to criminal justice. This included externally recognised success in managing change during the covid pandemic.
- The strength of the candidate’s experience in strategic delivery, partnership engagement and change management would support the PCC in the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan.
- The candidate demonstrated a good understanding of good governance which would be important in the Chief of Staff role.

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 of Staff. 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