Lancashire Police and Crime Panel

Report of the confirmation hearing on 19th September 2018
Proposed appointment of the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A confirmation hearing was held by the Lancashire Police and Crime Panel ('the Panel') on Wednesday 19th September 2018 to consider the proposed appointment of the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire ('DPCC').

This report provides information on the Panel’s recommendation as a result of the confirmation hearing.

Present:
Chair
Councillor Alistair Bradley, Chorley Borough Council

Committee Members
Councillor Adrian Lythgoe, Rossendale Borough Council
Councillor Andy Kay, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Councillor Albert Atkinson, Lancashire County Council[Sub]
Councillor Tony Martin, Burnley Borough Council
Councillor M Dad-Hyndburn Borough Council
Councillor David Whipp, Pendle Borough Council
Councillor Margaret Foxley, Pendle Borough Council
Councillor Brian Rollo, Preston City Council
Councillor Caroline Moon [Sub], South Ribble Borough Council
Councillor Roger Berry, Wyre Borough Council
Councillor L Oades, Fylde BC

Officers:
Sian Roxborough, Council Solicitor
Phil Llewellyn, Governance and Democratic Manager
Sally Ann Wolstenholme, Lead Consultant Human Resources

Also present:
Angela Harrison, Director at the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire ['PCC']
Christopher Webb, proposed DPCC candidate

Apologies:

Clive Grunshaw, Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire
Cllr Geoff Driver, Lancashire County Council
Cllr Ged Mirfin, Ribble Valley Borough Council
Cllr Ken Hind, Ribble Valley Borough Council
Councillor Ivan Taylor, Blackpool Borough Council
Councillor Ben Aitken, Fylde Borough Council
Councillor M Nathan, South Ribble
Councillor Kevin Wright, West Lancs Borough Council
Mr Abdul Mulla- Independent Co Opted Member
Mr A Baghdadi- Independent Co Opted Member

Declarations of Interest:
None

Confirmation Hearing Purpose and Procedure:

The Chair explained the purpose of the meeting, which was to hold a confirmation hearing before making a report and recommendation to the Police and Crime Commissioner (‘the Commissioner’) in relation to his proposed appointment of the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire.

The hearing was a meeting of the Panel, held in public, at which the proposed candidate, Christopher Webb, was requested to appear for the purpose of answering questions relating to the proposed appointment.

The Chair explained the procedure to be followed and it was indicated that when the questions asked of the Candidate by Panel members were concluded, the Panel would go into closed session, in order to agree a report and recommendations to the Commissioner. The Panel’s decision would be communicated to the Commissioner in writing by the next working day following the hearing and a copy of the communication would be provided to the candidate.

It was confirmed that the Panel had no power to veto the proposed appointment and could only recommend that the proposed appointment should or should not be approved. If it was not approved this could only be on the basis that the candidate had not reached the minimum standards required in relation to professional competence and personal independence.

The Hearing:

Details of a report with notification of the proposed appointment and accompanying documents from the PCC, were considered by the Panel. These provided details of the appointment process leading to the PCC’s proposal to appoint a Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire. As well as including the name of the person whom the PCC proposed to appoint, the report detailed the criteria used to assess the suitability of the candidate, why the candidate satisfied those criteria and the terms and conditions of appointment.

Questions had been agreed in advance at a pre-meeting of the Panel in accordance with the Local Government Guidance on Confirmation Hearings. Questioning covered the issues of professional competence and personal independence.
Panel members asked questions of the candidate regarding his skills, knowledge and experience that were applicable to the role that would enable him to articulate the voice of the people, cut crime and deliver an efficient police service within Lancashire which the Commissioner alone would not be able to do. The candidate’s response included reference to how he could help the PCC in his role scrutinising the Chief Constable, engaging with the community and stakeholders and how he would assist in managing the budget/setting the precept. He set out what his role could and could not cover in terms of legislative requirements. Furthermore he briefly outlined his previous work roles in the public sector and experience within the political arena.

The Panel enquired about the candidate’s experience of engaging with a variety of partners. He said he was approachable, believing in the importance of honest and frank communication for collective responses and explained who he believed key partners to be.

The panel questioned the candidate about accountability between the Commissioner, the Chief Constable and the Panel to which the candidate indicated a clear understanding. Further questioning centred around ensuring Lancashire had a strong voice in Westminster and the candidate explained his experience of lobbying, his work internship in parliament during his degree and the relevant insight it had given him into, for example, making a case for funding.

The Panel then asked about managing public expectation in times of challenge to the police service. The candidate acknowledged the changing role of the police, how they could engage with the community, different ways of communicating and pressure on resources.

The next question related to the measurement of the success of the role and achieving value for money. The candidate responded by informing the Panel that whilst this was a 3 day a week position he would treat it as his primary job and had no other work secured. He stated he wanted to be accessible to the public, listening to concerns and publicising his work weekly as he understood the role needed to be quantified.

The Panel then enquired about how the DPCC would ensure he represented all communities across Lancashire, addressing the needs of diverse communities especially in areas of deprivation and rural communities. The candidate said that in his community work in Blackpool [an area of high deprivation] he had worked with a common goal and objectives despite political beliefs, as councillors represent all communities. He also referred to a preventative approach and how he could be a conduit for passing on queries to the police from rural areas. Following a supplementary question regarding multi-racial communities the candidate informed the Panel that he had applied for his internship with the Right Honourable David Lammy MP in one of the most diverse constituencies in the country which had helped him understand the associated problems with issues such as hate crime. He also stated he had worked with the LGBT community and disability groups.

The final question asked how the candidate would approach a situation if his personal viewpoint conflicted with that he was representing on behalf of the Commissioner. The candidate reiterated the importance of frank debate and providing an honest opinion in private but his willingness to deliver a collective response. He stated ultimately decisions rest with the PCC as he had been elected by the public and was therefore accountable to them.

When responses had been provided to all of the Panel Members’ questions, the candidate was given an opportunity to clarify any answers given and to ask questions of the Panel.

The hearing then concluded and the Panel went into closed session to consider its report and recommendations.
The Panel agreed that Christopher Webb was a suitable candidate to be appointed as DPCC and that his appointment should be approved by them in terms of meeting the necessary criteria. The panel further noted that it still believed that an appointment at this time was unwise due to the pressures facing front line policing.

**RESOLVED** – in discharging its duties and following questioning of the candidate the Panel was satisfied that Mr Webb met the criteria of professional competence and personal independence and recommended that the proposed candidate be appointed to the post of Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire.

**Background papers:**

LGA Guidance on Confirmation Hearings.