

**CHIEF CONSTABLE OF WEST MERCIA POLICE**

**APPOINTMENT PROCESS**

**INDEPENDENT MEMBER REPORT**

**18<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2023**

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## **1. Introduction**

This is the Independent Member's report relating to the appointment process for the Chief Constable for West Mercia.

Home Office Circular [013/2018](#) outlines the legal requirements and principles for the appointment of chief officers. It states that it is for the Police and Crime Commissioner to decide how they wish to run their recruitment process and which candidate they wish to appoint but that the PCC should involve at least one independent panel member during the assessment, shortlisting and interview process. The selection must observe the three principles of merit, fairness and openness. The College of Policing [guidance](#) for appointing chief officers, which has been in place since January 2021, should also inform the recruitment process.

The aim of this report is to provide an independent assessment of the extent to which the appointment process has been conducted in accordance with the principles of merit, fairness and openness and to provide oversight of the design and delivery of the assessment and selection processes used throughout the process.

In accordance with Home Office requirements, the process for the Chief Constable appointment for West Mercia is the responsibility of the PCC, Mr John Campion. Mr Gareth Boulton, led in the practical management of the appointment process at all stages, as per his role as Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer to the PCC, in line with College of Policing guidance.

## **2. Independent Member's role**

Home Office Circular 013/2018 states that at least one member of the appointment panel should be an independent member. The independent member should be suitably experienced in selection and assessment processes in order to have an informed view on the conduct of the appointment process in line with the principles of merit, fairness and openness.

When appointing an independent member for the process, the PCC is expected to base their decision on merit, fairness and openness, considering the skills and experience required. On appointment, the independent member should be provided with the opportunity to fully understand their role and responsibilities for each stage of the selection process.

## **3. Process of appointment of Independent member**

I was contacted by the Chief Executive of the Office of the PCC on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2023 regarding the role of independent member for the appointment process. Having acted as the independent panel member for a previous Chief Constable appointment for West Mercia, I am well placed to understand the principles, processes and responsibilities required for the appointment of a Chief Constable and the role that the independent member plays in ensuring that these principles are upheld throughout the process.

In accordance with the requirements set by the College of Policing for the independent panel member, I have over 15 years' experience as a senior leader in the HR profession across a number of sectors and substantial experience in the selection and appointment of senior

postholders, as well as providing leadership to the creation and development of recruitment and selection procedures and policies within an organisation to ensure they are both legally compliant and reflect best practice. I am a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and a member of the CIPD HR Leaders' Forum for the West Midlands. In addition, through my current role as Director of Human Resources for the University of Worcester, I have an understanding of local, national and strategic needs and interests as encouraged by the College of Policing.

Following a further discussion on 23<sup>rd</sup> August to discuss this process in more detail and my role as the independent panel member, the Chief Executive confirmed my appointment to the process.

#### **4. Appointment process**

The appointment process included a number of stages of assessment which are detailed below. Each stage is intended to inform the assessment of candidates against the role profile for Chief Constable and the College of Policing Competency and Values Framework.

It should be noted that in advance of this appointment process, a previous appointment process was conducted for the Chief Constable role in October 2023, in which no appointment was made. Having reviewed feedback from each element of the assessment centre and taken appropriate advice, the PCC determined that none of the candidates sufficiently met the requirements of the role. The previous process was conducted with the same stages as detailed in this document. As the independent member of that panel, I was fully engaged in the previous process and content that it was conducted in accordance with the principles set by the College of Policing.

#### **5. Appointment panel**

The role of the Appointment Panel is set out in the Guidance for Chief Officer Appointments. This outlines that the Panel should be convened by the PCC before any stage of the appointment process takes place. In addition, it states the purpose of the panel is to challenge and test that the candidate meets the necessary requirements to perform the role and that the PCC should select a panel capable of discharging this responsibility.

The PCC should also ensure that panel members are diverse and suitably experienced and competent in selection practices and that they adhere to the principles of merit, fairness and openness. All members should be provided with a copy of the College of Policing guidance to ensure they are familiar with its content prior to the appointment process. In addition, it is the PCC's responsibility to ensure that appropriate briefing/assessor training is undertaken by all panel members. It is suggested that a panel of approximately five members is convened but this is at the discretion of the PCC.

The Appointment Panel for this process were:

- John Campion, Police and Crime Commissioner, West Mercia
- Marc Bayliss, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, West Mercia
- Adele Cope, Director of HR, University of Worcester, Independent member
- Cllr Shaun Davies, Leader Telford and Wrekin Borough Council

- David Shaw, former West Mercia Police Chief Constable and representative of Worcestershire Community Foundation

The panel members represented a diverse range of backgrounds and perspectives and all have experience in recruitment and assessment processes. Mr Shaw's inclusion also provided an expert policing advisor to the PCC. All panel members were provided with copies of the College of Policing guidance.

## **6. Assessment Process**

The assessment process involved a number of stages. As the independent member, I was briefed at all stages of the process and provided with the opportunity to share my feedback and advice in relation to the proposed approach and documentation. Further information on each stage of the process, including my assessment of its appropriateness and fairness, is detailed below.

### The role profile

A draft of the proposed job profile and a detailed document outlining the proposed approach to the selection process was shared in advance of the role being advertised for my review and comment. The job profile provided a clear indication of the purpose of the role, the key responsibilities and the required behaviours, skills, qualifications and experience. The person specification and assessment criteria for the role were based on the national Chief Constable Policing Professional Profile.

The Role Profile in the pack was produced in line with the present and future needs and priorities in the Force area, with reference to three key criteria as set out by the PCC in the letter to candidates. It referred to the need for West Mercia Police to re-establish itself as a consistently high performing service. It was also made explicit that the successful candidate would be expected to motivate and drive the force to delivering service improvements, maximising the value of investments, and make sure that the benefits of their leadership are felt for the public and for the police force itself.

Advice on the proposed process and documents was also sought from the College of Policing with changes made to respond to feedback. Noting that the documents were both comprehensive and appropriate documents for the process, I made a small number of suggestions relating to wording. These comments were taken on board and the final version included amends that reflected my feedback.

### Application pack

The application pack was clearly written and provided prospective applicants with details of the process of application as well as terms of appointment. The pack contained: a letter from the Police and Crime Commissioner to applicants, an overview of the Chief Constable role and the priorities for West Mercia, a role profile which included details of the role purpose, key responsibilities and the behaviours, skills, qualifications and experience needed for the role, and a timetable of the process.

Prospective candidates were also offered the opportunity to arrange an informal discussion with the PCC and/or Chief Executive prior to submitting an application.

The pack confirmed the timescales for the shortlisting and interview process and confirmed details of the Familiarisation Day which would be offered to all shortlisted candidates. There was a clear statement within the pack that a more specific and detailed interview schedule would be provided for shortlisted candidates; it advised potential candidates to expect the process to include the need to develop and deliver presentations. It explained that the selection process would be designed to explore the behaviours set out in the Competency and Values Framework and candidates' strengths in relation to the job description and person specification as set out in the pack. It also advised candidates that the selection process would include interviews with a stakeholder panel, a staff forum and a formal appointment panel.

The content of the pack was informative and, in addition to meeting the legal requirement, it gave prospective candidates the assurance that the process would be fair, open and based upon merit.

### Advertisement

Part Two of Annex B of the Secretary of State's determinations, made under Regulation 11 of the Police Regulations 2003, specifies that vacancies must be advertised on a public website or some other form of publication which deals with police matters circulating throughout England and Wales, and the closing date for applications must be at least three weeks after the date of the publication of the advertisement.

The advert for the role was placed on the PCC's and College of Policing websites on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> November and closed three weeks later on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November. The College of Policing also sent the advert along with a letter from the PCC by email to all eligible senior police officers in the UK.

This ensured that the role was promoted both locally and nationally, in order to encourage a strong field of eligible applicants.

### Shortlisting

Once the deadline for applications had passed, I attended a virtual shortlisting meeting with the PCC and the Chief Executive of the PCC on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November. Copies of the applications and a copy of the Appointment Panel scoring matrix were sent to me in advance of the meeting in order that I could review independently against the required skills and experience for the role prior to the group discussion.

At the meeting, each application was considered in detail, with reference to the assessment criteria, and discussed fully. Two applications were received, and having considered the applications in full, the Shortlisting Panel agreed to shortlist both candidates for interview.

Following agreement of the shortlist, the proposed structure for the assessment day was discussed and agreed.

## Assessment process

The assessment process for the shortlisted candidates was conducted on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> December at the West Mercia Police Headquarters in Hindlip and consisted of three elements: a Stakeholder panel, a Staff Forum, and an Appointment panel.

The Stakeholder Panel and Staff Forum were held on the morning of the assessment day.

The **Stakeholder Panel's** membership was\*:

- Simon Trickett, CEO, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board
- HHJ James Burbidge KC, Crown Court Judge, Worcester and Hereford
- Vic Allison, CEO, Wychavon Council
- Mamps Gill, Youth Justice Board
- Nicholas Coates, Deputy Chief Crown Prosecutor

\*Invitations for the Stakeholder panel were extended to others, but some were unable to attend on this date, meaning that the panel consisted of some different stakeholders to the previous Chief Constable process.

The Stakeholder Panel was supported by the PCC's Deputy Chief Executive Tony Morriss.

The Stakeholder Panel's assessment was based on a 10-minute presentation by candidates, followed by questions on the presentation and then set interview questions. Candidates were able to use Audio/Visual aids if they wished to do so.

The presentation subject was: "Developing Shared Approaches to Improve Outcomes for the Public."

Assessment criteria were provided to the Panel and each panel member was required to complete an Assessment Record. The assessment criteria were based on the College of Policing Competency and Values Framework and on the West Mercia Police Chief Constable Role Profile.

The Panel's scores and conclusions were collated and provided to the Assessment Panel at the end of the interview process, to inform the final outcome.

The **Staff Forum** consisted of 25 Officers and Staff from across the whole of the Force: geographic areas, ranks and disciplines. The PCC, the PCC's Chief Executive, and I attended to observe this session.

The Candidates were asked to lead the forum for 1 hour, without aids other than a flip chart, on the subject "Does policing in the public interest lead to public satisfaction". At the end of the allotted time and after the candidate had left the room, the Chief Executive collated feedback on the candidate's performance with reference to a number of set questions. The Forum's assessment criteria were based on the College of Policing Competency and Values Framework and on the West Mercia Police Chief Constable Role Profile.

The feedback from the Staff Forum was collated, summarised and provided in writing to the Appointment Panel, to inform the final decision making for the PCC.

In the afternoon of the assessment day, candidates were required to attend a **presentation and interview with the Appointment Panel**. The Appointment Panel was chaired by the PCC. Panel members had been provided with a copy of the Chief Constable Interview Matrix in advance of the assessment day and during the panel pre-meet, questions were allocated to panels in accordance with their areas of expertise and/or interest.

At the start of the appointment panel, Candidates were asked to give a 10 minute presentation to respond to the subject "How as Chief Constable you would support delivery of the Safer West Mercia Plan. Panel members were invited to ask questions in response to the presentation.

The formal interview was conducted in accordance with questions included in the matrix, with the panel invited to ask follow up questions by the Chair.

For each of the candidates, each panel member completed an Assessment Record. The marking scheme was clearly indicated on the interview matrix and based on a five-point scale, of which a rating of 5 referred to 'Exceeds the required standard' and a rating of 1 refers to 'Falls below the standard required'. Rating 3 referred to 'Meets the required standard'.

Panel Members scored each candidate for their Presentation and Interview stages. Panel members' scores were collated, and evidence was discussed where some slight differences of opinion had occurred. In the event that scores differed for a candidate, Panel Members listened to and considered very carefully the evidence offered by other Panel Members. This enabled each candidate to be assessed on merit, with reference to evidence throughout the process, and prior to the agreed score being recorded. The candidates displayed differences in their awarded scores for the different parts of the exercise.

Once the scores for the Presentation and Interviews were confirmed for each of the candidates, evidence from the Stakeholder Panel and Staff Forum was also considered, providing further insight into the performance of each of the two candidates.

Feedback from the two stakeholder panels and the scores from the Appointment Panel identified that both candidates met and exceeded the minimum standards required to be considered as appointable to the role.

On the basis that both candidates were deemed as appointable, the merits of each candidate were discussed in detail and the panel considered the differences in scoring, noting occasions when each of the candidates had exceeded the required standards.

The PCC, having considered all of the different elements of the assessment process with reference to the assessment criteria for the role, and having listened to the views of the panel, identified one candidate as being the preferred candidate for the role. The Panel confirmed their endorsement of this outcome.

The decision was therefore taken by the Police and Crime Commissioner to offer Commander Kyle Gordon, currently serving with the Metropolitan Police Service, the position of preferred candidate for the post of Chief Constable of West Mercia Police.



## **7. Conclusions**

Throughout the appointment process, I was provided with the opportunity to provide feedback and advice on the proposed approach and to share my professional opinion on the appointment process. This advice was well received and taken into account by the PCC.

As demonstrated by the detail provided in this report, the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia has been diligent in the conduct of this process, paying careful attention to the guidance provided by the College of Policing. Through the process outlined in this report, the Commissioner has fulfilled his responsibility to ensure that the selection of a preferred candidate was fair, open and based upon merit, and has in many cases gone above and beyond the minimum process requirements to ensure a comprehensive, inclusive and informed approach to such a key appointment.

The process ensured a rigorous and robust assessment of each candidate against the assessment criteria whilst also ensuring a fair and balanced process with equality of opportunity for each of the candidates.

For these reasons, I am confident that the selection process met the principles of fairness, openness and merit.

**Adele Cope FCIPD**