

Report on the Confirmation Hearing for Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley

Summary

This is a report and the recommendation on the Confirmation Hearing held by Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel for the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC) for Thames Valley, Mr Matthew Barber. This report is submitted to the Police and Crime Commissioner in accordance with the requirements of Paragraph 10, Schedule 1 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. The report recommends that Mr Barber be confirmed in his appointment to the role of Deputy PCC.

The Panel Members in attendance were:-

Councillor Patricia Birchley, Councillor Tony Ilott, Councillor Trevor Egleton, Councillor Kieron Mallon, Curtis James Marshall, Councillor Chris McCarthy, Councillor Barrie Patman, Councillor Dee Sinclair, Councillor Paul Sohal, Councillor Quentin Webb and Councillor Ian White.

Background detail to the Confirmation Hearing

The Panel received detailed paperwork at the meeting held on 16 December 2016 concerning the role of the DPCC.

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

The PCC made the following statement in support of his appointment in that the position of Deputy PCC is under his control. The legislation is very clear in this regard and the final decision about appointing a deputy is that of the commissioner. The Panel noted that the PCC had not had a Deputy since his election and recognised that he had a large area to cover across the Thames Valley. The PCC emphasised the importance of choosing somebody with the same values and respects the tradition of non-politicised British policing as well as the primary role of the police service and the Commissioner to act on behalf of the public to cut crime and improve crime detection rates.

The Panel asked the following questions and received the following responses:-

The candidate was asked to demonstrate his qualities which he could offer to the role. Matthew Barber had been Leader of the Vale of the White Horse since 2007 elections and had been a councillor since 2003 with a wide range of experience across the Thames Valley.

He had experience in devolution issues, licensing, commissioning services and had responsibility for the finance portfolio. As a Leader he had also worked closely with the Local Area Commander and the Chief Constable on policing issues.

The PCC was asked whether he would appoint any additional support such as associate PCC's to help cover the area of the Thames Valley. The PCC commented that once the Deputy appointment had been ratified he would start to look into this in more detail in the New Year.

The candidate was asked about his time commitment to the role of the Deputy PCC bearing in mind that he would still continue as Leader of the Vale of the White Horse. Matthew Barber reported that previously he had worked four days a week as an election agent and undertook his role as Leader on the remaining day plus the weekend and annual leave. With the role of Deputy PCC, as the terms and conditions state 22.2 hours per week, this was less of a time commitment than being an election agent.

The candidate was asked whether there were any gaps in skills between the PCC and himself. Matthew Barber reported that their skills were complementary and that he was competent to cover the responsibilities and functions listed in Appendix 1 of the report. He would need to discuss with the PCC which specific areas of responsibility he would have and would bring his local authority experience into his new role. He commented that this would complement the PCC's experience in local policing, finance and counter terrorism.

The candidate was asked whether he would give each geographical area across the Thames Valley equal priority? The PCC reported that some areas in the Thames Valley required more attention than others because of their differing needs but that all areas would be covered by himself and the Deputy PCC.

The PCC was asked why the role was part time and whether the role had been made to suit the person? The PCC reported that most Deputies had a part time role in order to allow them to carry on with other roles. However, he could review this if he felt it was necessary.

The PCC was asked how long the appointment would be for? The PCC reported that he was confident that this appointment would last for his remaining period as PCC.

The candidate was then asked about the conflict in interest as Deputy PCC and the Leader of the Vale of the White Horse. The PCC responded that he did not think this was an issue and gave the Mayoral appointment in Manchester as an example, which combined both roles. Matthew Barber reported that he did not envisage any conflict and if so, it would not be insurmountable. He had faced conflicts of interest as a Leader and made sure that he approached this with clarity and openness. As soon as he envisaged a conflict he would make his interest very clear and would ask his Cabinet colleagues to take a lead.

The candidate was asked about building a relationship with the Chief Constable? Matthew Barber reported that they had already developed a good relationship in his role as Leader but that this would be developed even further once he commenced his new role. He looked

forward to developing more detailed knowledge about the different communities of the Thames Valley.

The candidate was asked about his views on the draft Police and Crime Plan. He commented that he thought it was excellent. The areas he would like to champion included Neighbourhood Policing and Child Sexual Exploitation. He particularly referred to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs and the need to ensure consistency across the Thames Valley. He had lived in Oxfordshire for most of his life and had two young children so CSE was a particular focus. Areas of specific responsibility may include commissioning, Community Safety Partnerships and Fire and Rescue, Licensing, Safeguarding and deputising generally for the PCC. A separate question was asked about the importance of rural policing. Matthew Barber commented that he would give this the same priority as the PCC but also commented on the different problems faced by urban areas.

The candidate was asked about his experience in working with diverse communities. Matthew Barber specifically mentioned concerns around homelessness and looking at good practice within each Local Authority area to resolve particular issues. He commented that whilst the Vale of the White Horse was a prosperous area there were pockets of deprivation which could be even more unrepresented than urban areas. It was very important to engage with these areas and to develop a community led plan. He referred to a previous discussion at the Panel meeting where it was important not to just work with Community Leaders but with the whole community to understand all needs. He gave a previous example of working with a Chinese Community and joining links with the Citizen Advice Bureau to provide translations services and ensure that services were delivered to meet their needs.

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 thorough questioning. Matthew Barber commented that he was very impressed with the way Anthony Stansfeld carried out his role as PCC and gave leadership and direction whilst respecting the operational independence of the police. He believed that they would work well together and he would have sufficient independence from the PCC to challenge him in a constructive way if required.

The Panel, through discussions and examination of the evidence in the meeting, agreed:

- That the candidate demonstrated a range of experiences in the field of police and crime, and was confident and knowledgeable in these areas.
- That the candidate was cognisant of the considerable financial challenges facing the Commissioner, Constabulary and public sector partners.
- That the candidate provided examples which illustrated his ability to be open to, and manage, change.
- That the candidate reassured the Panel that he would be clear and open and respond appropriately to any conflict of interest in his role as Leader.
- That an understanding and enthusiasm for delivering the Commissioner's priorities placed the candidate in good stead for undertaking the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner role.
- That the preferred candidate had made a declaration confirming that he was not disqualified from taking up the position of Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner,

as per the relevant parts of Schedule 1 to the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

Recommendation

The Panel agreed that the candidate demonstrated a range of experience in the field of police and crime and was confident and knowledgeable in these areas. After deliberations members agreed to:

Endorse the confirmation of Councillor Matthew Barber's appointment as Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley.

Dated Wednesday 28 December 2016