

Police and Crime Panel

25th September 2023



Chief Constable Confirmation Hearing

Report of the Independent Member of the Chief Constable Recruitment Interview Panel :
Graham Easterlow, Chief Executive Officer, East Durham Trust

Purpose

1. To provide the Police and Crime Panel with my written report as the Independent Member of the Chief Constable's Recruitment Interview Panel which outlines my assessment of the appointment process used by the Office of the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner for which I consider has been conducted fairly, openly and based on merit. It also details the extent to which the interview panel fulfilled their responsibilities to challenge and test the candidates' suitability against the requirement of the role of Chief Constable for Durham Constabulary.

Background

2. Section 38 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 requires the selection and appointment of Chief Constables to be made by Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs).
3. Home Office Circular 13/2018: Selection and appointment of Chief Officers outlines that it is for the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to decide how they wish to run their appointment process for a Chief Constable. It is for them to decide at the end of the process which candidate they wish to appoint, subject to confirmation by the Police and Crime Panel. However, they should involve an Independent Member in the assessment and interviewing of candidates.

Independent Member

4. As part of the appointment process PCC Joy Allen appointed myself, Graham Easterlow, Chief Executive Officer of East Durham Trust (EDT) to be the Independent Member. EDT is a charity and VCS organisation based in Peterlee, County Durham. We provide a range of support services including debt and advice services, signposting, telephone befriending service and an arts engagement project know as East Durham Creates. This appointment was based on merit and is compliant with the above legislation and Home Office Circular 013/2018.
5. As part of the Independent Member role I am required to provide the Police and Crime Panel with a report on the appointment process, at the same time as the name of the preferred appointee, addressing the appointment principles of merit, fairness and

openness and the extent to which the panel was able to fulfil its purpose (e.g. to challenge and test that the candidate meets the necessary requirements to perform the role). In addition I am required to:

- Be suitably experienced and competent in assessment and selection practices.
- Undertake appropriate briefing/assessor training.
- Be aware and have an understanding of the needs and interests of the recruiting force and local community.

Appointment Panel

6. I met with the Chief of Staff, OPCC and have also received a briefing by a suitably qualified Psychologist at the College of Policing.
7. There were four Panel Members appointed as outlined below:
 - Joy Allen, Police and Crime Commissioner for County Durham and Darlington (Appointing Officer)
 - John Hewitt, Chief Executive Officer, Durham County Council
 - Cllr Stephen Harker, Leader, Darlington Borough Council
 - Graham Easterlow, Chief Executive Officer, East Durham Trust
8. The panel included an appropriate range of stakeholders from the Police and Crime Commissioner who has a background in community safety, a chief officer from a local authority who also has a background in finance, a council Leader with many years' experience as a local politician and has previously chaired a Police and Crime Panel, and I brought the expertise from the voluntary and community sector. Its composition and role mirrored the importance placed by the PCC on partnerships and working with stakeholders.
9. All were given a briefing and had access to a copy of the Guidance for Chief Officer Appointments, ensuring they were informed on their duties in this appointments process. I consider the panel to have met the needs outlined in the guidance on experience and diversity.
10. The support and advice of the College of Policing was useful throughout the design of the process, including at the interview stage. They did not however have a role in the decision-making process.
11. Advisors to the appointment panel were:
 - Andrea Petty, Chief of Staff and Monitoring Officer, Office of the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner
 - Michelle Robson, HR Manager working with the OPCC
 - Stephen Smith, Higher Psychologist, Occupational Psychology, College of Policing
12. The role of the Chief Executive/Chief of Staff of the OPCC (as defined in College of Policing guidance) is to support the PCC by ensuring the appointment procedure is properly conducted in line with the requirements set out in legislation, meeting the principles of fairness, openness and selection on merit. In addition, the Chief Executive

is required to ensure appropriate monitoring of the procedures. The Chief Executive of the OPCC worked consistently with the College of Policing to maintain standards, providing the relevant information to panel members on the main panel and stakeholder panels members throughout the planning and administration of the appointment process.

Recruitment Advert

13. The job advert, candidate pack and application form was placed on the PCCs website and the College of Policing website. It adhered closely to the Guidance for Chief Officer Appointments and was reviewed in draft by the College of Policing to ensure it met current requirements. It was placed on 25th July and remained there for three weeks until 15th August 2023. The College of Policing Senior Leadership Hub also sent a letter to all eligible Deputy and Assistant Chief Constables to alert them to the advert. In this way all eligible applicants in the 'pool' were made aware of the opportunity. The aim was to attract the strongest possible field of applicants, demonstrating openness.
14. The PCC and OPCC staff actively demonstrated from the outset that in the interests of public accountability, they were committed to adhering to the principles of openness, fairness and merit.
15. The published recruitment information pack was professionally designed, comprehensive, with links offering more detail. The pack included:
 - A welcome letter from the PCC
 - A section about Durham Constabulary, its employees and its history
 - Who the key partners are
 - The priorities that the new Chief Constable will be faced with
 - Inspection and Force Performance
 - A map of the neighbourhood policing areas
 - Job description, particulars and role competencies
 - Timetable
 - How to apply. This also included an offer to have an informal discussion with the PCC and / or Chief of Staff.
16. Applicants were asked to complete an application form and to seek to answer the following questions in order to provide an appropriate tool to support merit based judgements:
 - Why you think you should be the next Chief Constable of Durham Constabulary including the specific qualities, skills and experience you will bring to this role.
 - Examples of how you have led a programme of transformation across policing, what the successes and barriers were and how your leadership led to improved performance across the Force.
 - Durham Constabulary is an Outstanding Force – how your experience will ensure it maintains a high grading.
 - How you have put victims at the centre of policing, whilst also improving confidence and satisfaction levels?
 - How you have led on problem solving approaches to achieve organisational goals.

Response to Advert and Applications

17. Three applications were received from both male and female candidates. Three candidates took the opportunity to have an informal discussion with the PCC and two took the opportunity to have an informal discussion with the Chief Executive. Whilst the application numbers were low, this represents the picture nationally where the pool of potential Chief Constables are low. The response rate is in line with the national average.
18. In the spirit of being open and fair the decision was taken to progress all three candidates to the next stage of the recruitment process which was psychometric testing, stakeholder panels and the appointment interviews. This was in consultation with the College of Policing Senior Leadership Hub.

Psychometric Testing

19. The College of Policing undertook online psychometric testing with the three candidates and a briefing was provided back to them. The outcome of the testing was provided to the Panel members by the College of Policing prior to the interviews via a briefing. It did not rank or assess candidates, in order to avoid bias.

Familiarisation

20. All three candidates requested familiarisation sessions with the PCC and a range of Force, OPCC and partners' senior staff and there was also the opportunity to visit policing sites. These sessions took place at the convenience of the candidates and provided them with the local context. It was not an opportunity to gain additional information about the candidates but provided a further example of transparency and fairness to all candidates. All candidates were provided with a pack of information focusing on performance, finance and strategy of the Force.

Stakeholder Panels

21. Three Stakeholder Panels were set up with the three candidates the day before the appointment interviews. It was explained that the panels were not interview panels but rather a two-way conversation between panel members and the candidates. Questions were collated from Panel members and were refined and agreed with the Chairs of the Panels. The candidates provided ten minutes verbal presentation about why they were the best candidate for the Chief Constable position and the questions followed. The Panels were:

Partners Panel

The composition of this panel including a mix of representatives from across County Durham and Darlington including Public Health, Elected Members, County Durham and Darlington Fire & Rescue Service, Probation Service, Integrated Care Board, Victims' Champion, OPCC, Community Safety and Durham Constabulary Governance and Insights.

Young People's Panel

The composition of this panel were from organisations who work with young people and also three young people attended. An Elected Member chaired the Panel with representatives from Durham Agency Against Crime, Youth Justice and a representative of ApproachToo. The Young People asked a question each. This provided a different dynamic for the candidates and provided the opportunity to look "through the eyes of a child".

Special Interest Panel

The composition of this panel included a number of members of special interest groups from across the Force Staff Network Groups including Durham Ethnic Minority Support Association, Wellbeing, STAR, LGBT+, Association of Muslim Policing and Demsa, Menopause, Neurodiversity Association, Enable, Association of Superintendents and Christian Police Association. In addition this group was joined by the OPCC Chief Finance Officer, Durham Police Federation and UNISON.

22. The OPCC had made significant effort to ensure there was as wide a representation of stakeholders, whilst ensuring the sessions were balanced and productive.
23. It was agreed in advance that the opinions of the three stakeholder forums would not be scored or totalled numerically in such a way as to rank candidates. This was because members participating had not been trained in this and were not making measurable judgements linked to the competency areas. The sessions were advisory only, to ensure that all final assessments and decisions were merit based. This was explained clearly to stakeholders through a briefing by the representative from the College of Policing. All involved welcomed the opportunity to participate in the process.
24. A facilitator for each stakeholder panel consisted of the College of Policing, the Chief Executive/Chief of Staff of the OPCC and the Strategic Partnership Manager of the OPCC. Once candidates had left the stakeholder panels the facilitator requested feedback from Panel members about what they liked about each candidate and what they suggested the interview Panel may want to probe further the following day during the appointment interviews.

Interview and Assessment

25. All panel members were provided with detailed information prior to the interviews including candidate information pack, applications, College of Policing guidance including competencies.
26. Candidates were given a presentation topic provided in advance of the interviews with presentations provided to Human Resources prior to interview. Interview questions and psychometric assessments were provided to the panel on the morning of the interviews. This was done to minimise candidates accessing questions beforehand. The questions were focussed around the Police and Crime Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan. Each candidate had the opportunity to demonstrate evidence and experience of meeting the competencies.

27. Panel members were asked to score candidates on a five point scale, based on criteria. The asking of questions were divided between panel members. Evidence given in the answers provided by candidates was recorded by panel members. This provided evidence of a fair and equal process for all candidates. Panel members received a briefing from the College of Policing representative prior to the interview helping to ensure the process would be transparent, objective and based on merit. This showed the PCC wished to have agreed standards and therefore panel members knew the expectations on them.
28. The feedback from the stakeholder sessions was provided to panel members the evening before the interviews as well as suggested areas the main panel may wish to probe further at interview.
29. Interview Panel members scored the candidates independently and then discussion on the overall score was agreed based on consensus decision making. It was explained that the PCC was the statutory decision maker for the preferred candidate, subject to the Confirmation Hearing by the Police and Crime Panel on 21st September 2023.
30. The PCC and some panel members had met one of the candidates in a professional capacity. Therefore, in order to ensure fairness of the process it was noted that judgements would be based only on evidence at interview, not prior knowledge of candidates.
31. The process was objective, fair to all candidates, and clearly based on merit.

Decision Making

32. The panel were able to make their decision based on detailed and multifaceted evidence, including the candidates' written application, the stakeholder feedback, the unranked psychometric testing briefing, the scored presentation and the scored interview questions.
33. The panel were supported at all stages by the College of Policing and a competent and trained Human Resources adviser. This upheld the members of the panel and provided opportunity for objective support and challenge. The non-panel members enabled a constructive assessment based on observation and evaluation of the information provided and the performance of the candidate during the interview.
34. The information provided and the interview process was appropriate for the scale and scope of the post. Fair challenge was given to ensure a consistent approach in decision making. The clear and well supported process allowed the panel to weigh up all information and make a focused, evidence based and objective decision.
35. The decision making process was objective, fair to all candidates, and clearly based on evidenced merit.

Conclusion

36. The final selection has been made through a robust and evidence based assessment. Candidates have been provided with clear information on the scope and scale of the post, open and supportive mechanisms to carry out familiarisation and the greatest opportunity to demonstrate their suitability for the post through a fair, robust and transparent process.
37. Decisions made have been informed by people from a range of backgrounds and have been evidence based.
38. With the information provided and from my independent observation it is fair to conclude that at all stages of the process there has been a consistent, proportionate and compassionate approach. This has enabled a measured and considered process facilitating fair opportunity for all candidates.
39. As the independent member of the panel I am assured that this process has been clear, transparent, supportive and objective from start to conclusion.

**Graham Easterlow
Chief Executive Officer
East Durham Trust**

Appendix 1: Risks and Implications

Finance

n/a

Staffing

n/a

Equality and Diversity

n/a

Accommodation

n/a

Crime and Disorder

n/a

Children's Act 2004

n/a

Stakeholder/Community Engagement

n/a

Environment

n/a

Collaboration and Partnerships

n/a

Value for Money and Productivity

n/a

Potential Impact on Police and Crime Plan Priorities

n/a

Commissioning

n/a

Other risks

n/a

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