

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL
8th July, 2016

Present:-

Barnsley MBC

Councillor R. Frost

Rotherham MBC

Councillor S. Sansome

Sheffield CC

Councillor J. Drayton

Councillor T. Hussain (in the Chair)

Councillor J. Otten

Councillor M. Rooney

Co-opted Members

Mr A. Carter

Mr S. Chu

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor D. Griffin (Barnsley MBC)

Councillor A. Jones (Doncaster MBC)

Councillor C. McGuinness (Doncaster MBC)

F17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

F18. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair indicated that he did not propose to exclude the press or public from the meeting unless it was necessary to discuss issues which would require the disclosure of exempt information.

F19. PROPOSED APPOINTMENT OF A CHIEF CONSTABLE FOR SOUTH YORKSHIRE - CONFIRMATION HEARING

The Chair welcomed Panel Members, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the preferred candidate for the role of Chief Constable, Mr. S. Watson, as well as members of the public in attendance, to the meeting. He also apologised to the Police and Crime Commissioner and Mr. Watson for the need to re-schedule the meeting to ensure that a sufficient number of members could attend in order for the Panel could exercise its statutory powers.

The Panel considered a report from the Police and Crime Commissioner setting out his proposal to appoint a new Chief Constable for South Yorkshire Police, Mr Stephen Watson, in accordance with the requirements of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. The Police and Crime Commissioner provided a brief overview of the recruitment and selection process that had been undertaken and explained that the key characteristics that were required from the postholder included the authority to build and rebuild the public trust, and confidence in South Yorkshire Police and lead fundamental change and inspire the workforce

The Panel asked the Police and Crime Commissioner to explain why Mr. Watson was the best candidate of those that had made it to the final stage of the process. Dr. Billings explained that he had been impressed by Mr. Watson's ability to handle the media and understand a developing situation quickly. He also indicated that he had been impressed by the way in which Mr. Watson had appreciated how reputational issues affecting South Yorkshire Police had impacted on the morale of the organisation and what he would do in order to improve morale and the reputation of the Force. The Panel also sought assurances from the Police and Crime Commissioner that the proposed appointment would not be a short term fix. In response, Dr. Billings cited a number of long-term issues that required resolution and that the contract for the new Chief Constable would cover a five year period. He was satisfied that Mr. Watson was the best candidate to address the challenges that lay ahead and put right the reputation of the force both locally and nationally.

In order to make a recommendation to the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Panel asked questions of Mr Watson and initially sought further information on the qualities that he would bring to the role. In response, Mr Watson set out his career history and outlined specific examples of high profile policing activity that he had led or been involved in throughout his career.

Members sought to understand from Mr Watson how he would begin to change the culture of the force and address legacy issues arising from the Hillsborough tragedy, Orgreave and child sexual exploitation. Mr Watson indicated that it would require a cultural shift within South Yorkshire Police and one which returned to old fashioned behaviours which had previously engendered trust and confidence in the police. He categorically confirmed that understanding and learning from victim experience would be a lynchpin of the approach that he would embed within the force.

In response to questioning from Members, Mr Watson also confirmed that neighbourhood policing would be front and centre of his approach and acknowledged that the absence of neighbourhood police tended to lead to spikes in crime. The neighbourhood approach was cited as the principal form of intelligence for high performing policing cultures.

Mr Watson provided the Panel with examples of where the police had actively contributed to community cohesion and reducing tensions in the community and referred to his specific experience within the London Borough of Haringey at the time of the riots in the summer of 2011.

The Panel retired to consider their recommendation to the Police and Crime Commissioner in respect of his proposal to appoint Mr Watson and returned shortly to confirm its unanimous support for the appointment of Mr Watson. The Chair confirmed that the Panel looked forward to working with Mr Watson as the new Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police and wished him well.

Resolved:-

That the Police and Crime Commissioner be advised that the Panel unanimously support his proposal to appoint Mr. Stephen Watson as the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police.