

**Assessment and selection for the post of
Chief Constable for South Wales Police**

Independent Member's Report

October 2020



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1. Introduction

Home Office Circular 13/2018 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, shortlisting and interviewing of candidates.

This is the Independent Member's report relating to the appointment process for the next Chief Constable for South Wales. The process is the responsibility of Police and Crime Commissioner Alun Michael.

The aim of this report is to provide an assessment of the extent to which the appointment process in South Wales has been conducted fairly, openly and based on merit. It also details the extent to which the panel fulfilled their responsibility to challenge and test the candidates' suitability against the requirements of the role.

2. Independent Member's role

The role of the Independent Member was laid out in Home Office Circular 20/2012 and updated in Home Office Circular 13/2018. It is described more fully in the Guidance for Chief Officer Appointments produced and maintained by the College of Policing, in consultation with a wide range of current and former stakeholder groups. Those consulted in its preparation have included Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, the National Police Chiefs Council, Senior Police Officers Association, Police Superintendents Association and the Home Office. It was produced under the direction of the Sub-group on Chief Officer Appointments of the Police Advisory Board for England and Wales.

I am an Independent Member from the list originally created by the College of Policing in 2012 and maintained by them until 2018. In order to become a member of this list I was required to undergo a fair, open and merit-based selection process. This process focussed on my suitability as someone skilled in assessment and capable of quality assuring assessment processes. I have undergone an induction to this role from the College of Policing, for whom I have also worked as an External Assessor at senior selection centres.

Further details of my role as Independent Member are set out in the role profile in Appendix A and my background is provided in more detail in Appendix B.

3. Independent Member remit in the Chief Constable appointment process

I was invited by the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to become involved in this appointment from the advertising stage onwards. Arrangements were made sufficiently well in advance, with my appointment finalised in September 2020, and selection exercises arranged for 21 and 23 October 2020. The application pack with the role requirements and person specification was assembled by the PCC. It adhered closely to the Guidance for Chief Officer Appointments. The PCC is to be commended for involving me from the early stages in the process.

Elsewhere in the country, the Independent Member is sometimes only involved in the final selection interviews, but in this instance staff were open to including me from early on. My independent advice was welcomed and respected. I had telephone and email contact to arrange the practical details and to discuss any queries as they arose. For example, the Chief Executive of the PCC discussed with me the makeup of the interview questions, to get an appropriate balance across the competency areas. We also discussed getting a balance of questions based upon future scenarios, supported by probing to verify past achievements. This evidenced an open attitude, with PPC team being keen to base the selection on merit, using an evidenced based approach.

A relatively small pool of candidates is not uncommon at this level. In an attempt to maximise the size of the pool and to demonstrate openness to all who might apply, all forces in the UK were contacted and the eligible group of officers in each force were alerted to the existence of the vacancy through the advertisement process. The PCC and his staff actively demonstrated from the outset that in the interests of public accountability, they were committed to adhering to the principles of fairness, openness and merit.

4. Appointments panel

The appointments panel role 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. There should be no conflicts of interest between panel members and the applicant pool.

The Guidance states that consideration may be given to involving panel members in helping to define the requirements of the role, as well as in shortlisting and selection. It explains that the purpose of the panel is to challenge and test if the candidates meet 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, suitably experienced and competent in selection practices. They must adhere to the principles of merit, fairness and openness. All members should be provided with a copy of this 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.

Alun Michael, PCC for South Wales, actively followed this advice. It was acknowledged that this was the most important decision he would make as PCC and the Guidance was taken seriously. Within this appointment process the panel had been agreed at the outset as consisting of the following members:

- Alun Michael, PCC for South Wales
- Emma Wools, Deputy PCC
- Naomi Alleyne, Director of Equalities and Social Justice, Welsh Local Government Association
- Paul Orders, Chief Executive, Cardiff City Council
- Reg Kilpatrick, Executive Director for Local Government, Welsh Government
- Tracey Cooper, Chief Executive, Public Health Wales
- Myself, Gill Lewis, Independent Member

The panel included an appropriate range of stakeholders from the public sector. Its

composition and role mirrored the importance placed on partnership working in the locality. Also in attendance as Monitoring Officer was Lee Jones, Chief Executive of the PCC.

An individual with professional policing knowledge is not a compulsory component of an appointment panel but, when a Policing Adviser is assigned, the role is defined in the Guidance for Chief Officer Appointments. It includes providing policing advice on the development and design of the appointment process; advising how each candidate's experience and skills fit policing-specific requirements during shortlisting and selection procedures; playing an active role in assessing performances in exercises and interviews; and supporting the PCC during decision making.

For this appointment, the extensive experience of the PCC was considered sufficient to meet the panel's needs.

All panel members were identified to be part of the panel by the PCC. Their senior operational experience was sufficient to allow them to challenge and test others at executive level. All were given a briefing and access to a copy of the Guidance for Chief Officer Appointments, ensuring they were well informed on their duties in this appointments process.

Five of the proposed panel members were white, two (based on observation) were of black and or minority ethnic origin. There were no declared disabilities. The population of Wales is approximately 95% white British / white Other. In view of the profile of the population, it was considered that diversity needs were adequately met on this occasion. There was also a good gender mix.

The role of the Chief Executive (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 and PCC team in South Wales was represented by Lee Jones, Chief Executive. He and his team worked consistently to maintain standards, collaborating openly and helpfully with the Independent Member and other panel members throughout the planning and administration of the appointment process.

5. Stakeholder panels

Three advisory stakeholder panels were used in this process, two days before the formal selection panel. An external panel of stakeholders was selected from partner agencies from the third sector, with an emphasis on equalities and diversity. The Ethics Committee formed a second panel. Chief Executives and local authority leaders formed a third. Each panel used the same discussion points and timings for all candidates, to ensure consistency and hence fairness. They were also attended by Lee Jones, Chief Executive, to monitor their delivery. Feedback was reported to the selection panel on the final day, but only after the panel had themselves assessed the candidates, in order not to adversely affect their scoring or to create bias.

It was agreed in advance that the opinions of the forums would not be scored numerically, as members participating had not been trained in this and were not

making measurable judgements linked to the competency areas. They were to be advisory only, to ensure that all final assessments and decisions were merit based.

The order in which candidates were seen by all four panels was varied throughout the process. This was further evidence of how the process sought to be scrupulously fair to all.

6. Panel briefing / training

The Office of the PCC followed College of Policing guidance in offering all members of the selection panel a written briefing prior to the interview exercises. This set out the College of Policing guidance, helping to ensure the process would be transparent, objective and based on merit, a summary of this was sent to panel members in advance of the interview. At a pre-meeting on the final interview day, the optional use of supplementary probing interview questions was discussed, to ensure that all competency areas would be fully tested. This illustrated a willingness to make sure that the selection would be made on a clear evidence base, again demonstrating openness and transparency in the process.

There was discussion in advance around what the minimum acceptable scores might be for each competency, to permit an appointment. The PCC's approach in establishing agreed standards and expectations in advance with all panel members was to ensure decisions would be based on evidence and merit, avoiding bias.

I was able to clarify that consensus decision making by the panel was the preferred approach, but in the event of inability to achieve this, the PCC would be considered as first among equals on the panel. He would make the final recommendation on the preferred candidate, subject to ratification by the Police and Crime Panel.

The PCC and some panel members had met some of the candidates previously in a professional capacity. In order to ensure fairness of the process, it was noted that that judgements would be based only on the evidence available in front of the panel, not on prior knowledge. This was to ensure impartiality, consistency and fairness.

Briefing of the panel prior to the interview was well planned. This helped the panel equip themselves for their role in being able to challenge and test candidates fairly.

7. Role profile

The selection panel was briefed on the role profile as advertised. This reflected the national guidance, including primary accountabilities, the competencies required and the terms and conditions offered. In discussion with the PCC prior to the selection exercises, it was emphasised that a focus on early intervention and prevention was seen as essential, together with action to improve the diversity of the workforce at all levels. The ability to work with partners was also key, as was an understanding of the Welsh context and devolved government. This local emphasis was clearly reflected in the design of the process, with a substantial role given to stakeholders on both days of the assessment process.

8. Advert

The application pack had been drawn up by the team in the PCC in line with the national guidance. The post had been advertised for three weeks ending 14 October via the websites for South Wales PCC, South Wales Police, and the College of Policing Senior Leadership Hub. In this way all eligible applicants in the UK pool were made aware of the opportunity. Every effort was made to be transparent about the availability of the post and to encourage all potential applicants to consider it. The aim was to attract the strongest possible field of applicants, demonstrating openness.

The published application pack was comprehensive, with links offering more detail. The pack included terms of appointment and met legal requirements. There was a clear intention to be open and transparent with candidates from the earliest stages of the process being published.

The exercise was successful in that it attracted five initial enquiries, resulting in three applications.

9. Assessment design

The application form used was in line with the College of Policing guidance. It required details of the previous three postings held by the applicant; training, including successful completion of the Strategic Command Course; and evidence of skills and experience within the last three years related to the role profile. In being based on evidence of previous achievements, it was an appropriate tool to support merit-based judgements.

The choice of interview questions was based on demonstration of evidence against the professional competency framework for policing, with a focus on seven competencies. A standard assessment sheet was provided, allowing panel members to rate candidates on a seven point scale against each competency. This was designed to give transparent evidence of a fair and equal process for all candidates.

The interview questions produced by the PCC in liaison with the Independent Member were of good quality in that they were open questions, closely linked to local priorities. In discussion with myself, these were supplemented on the day by additional probing questions, to improve the balance between hypothetical future based questions and those asking about previous experience and achievements. This review also allowed the questions to be more clearly linked to the competency areas, again demonstrating a keenness to obtain clear evidence of performance, as part of a merit based approach.

In discussing the scoring system to be used, it was agreed that the panel would not rely only on a simple arithmetic addition or percentage weighting of scores, noting there was no clear evidence on which to base any weighting. It was agreed in advance that the panel would compare the whole set of scores for each candidate and seek to come to a consensus decision.

A familiarisation process prior to the two day assessment was included in the design of the process. It was confirmed that this was to inform candidates about the local context. It was not used to gain additional information about them. This was once again to ensure transparency and fairness. The familiarisation process was conducted virtually rather than face to face on this occasion, as were the stakeholder and selection panels, due to Covid 19 restrictions.

10. Assessment delivery

It was agreed in advance that the panel would be willing to decide not to appoint at the final selection stage. Standards would not be allowed to fall if the pool of candidates was not of sufficient quality.

Three applications for the post were received, two external and one internal. Evidence from a survey presented to the Home Affairs Select Committee in 2018 found that just over half of chief officers appointed were the only candidate for the job, with a national average of 2.21 candidates per vacancy. This suggests that in South Wales, the size of the response was good, with appropriate efforts having been made to make the process as open as possible.

Shortlisting was carried out by the PCC in consultation with panel members, in line with the national guidance. It was agreed to shortlist all three applicants for interview, two males and one female. There was insufficient evidence at this stage to rule any candidate out.

The timetable for the stakeholder panels and final interview allowed adequate time for each element. One hour was allowed for each final interview. The carefully planned timetable helped to ensure that the process would be objective, fair to all candidates who might have applied, and clearly based on merit.

The PCC undertook to arrange the delivery of the final decision to candidates and to provide feedback to any unsuccessful applicants.

11. Assessment decision making

Each panel member first scored separately at the interview stage. Scores were collated and any differences of opinion were discussed, in order to agree a moderated consensus view. This enabled the candidates to be carefully assessed on merit, with reference to evidence throughout.

Consensus was reached throughout, and there was a unanimous recommendation regarding the preferred candidate, who scored above others in respect of the competency framework. It was noted that the interview panel's recommendation concurred with those of each of the three stakeholder panels.

The panel made a unanimous recommendation that Deputy Chief Constable Jeremy Vaughan was the preferred candidate. The PCC concurred with this in making his own decision to recommend DCC Jeremy Vaughan to the Police and Crime Panel Confirmatory Hearing for appointment as the next Chief Constable of South Wales.

12. Conclusions

Through the steps outlined above, the PCC fulfilled his responsibility to ensure the selection process was properly put in place in accordance with the responsibilities set out in the national guidance. Well planned use of the competency framework throughout the process allowed clear evidence to be recorded and evaluated in order to make objective decisions. The panel rigorously challenged and tested the candidates against the necessary requirements for the role, giving assurance that the

recommended appointment was appropriate. There was also carefully considered discussion between panel members before coming to a unanimous decision.

As the Independent Member I found that the decision-making process was demonstrably open and fair, with good efforts applied to seek the best available field of candidates. It was clearly based on merit, with decisions taken on careful analysis of evidence. Adherence to the highest standards throughout was taken seriously.

Thanks to the scrupulous preparation done by the PCC, notably by Chief Executive Lee Jones, as well as to the professional attention devoted to the process by the panel, I can confirm that the selection of the preferred candidate to be Chief Constable of South Wales met the principles of fairness, openness and merit.

Gill Lewis
Independent Member
October 2020

Appendix A: Independent Member role profile

Home Office Circular 13/2018 states that at least one member of the appointment panel should be an Independent Member. It is important that the Independent Member is suitably experienced in selection and assessment practices, so they can determine the extent to which the appointment process is conducted in line with the principles of merit, fairness and openness.

The role as set out in College of Policing Guidance for Appointing Chief Officers requires the independent member 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
- in collaboration with the PCC and other panel members, shortlist and assess applicants against the agreed appointment criteria and consider which candidate most closely meets the appointment criteria
- produce a written report on the appointment process, to be submitted to the PCP at the same time as the name of the preferred appointee, expressly and explicitly addressing the appointment principles of merit, fairness and openness and the extent to which the panel was able to fulfil its purpose (eg to challenge and test that the candidate meets the necessary requirements to perform the role).

Appendix B: Independent Member pen picture - Gill Lewis

I have led or advised on senior Police recruitment at Chief Officer level since 2007, firstly to meet Police Authority requirements, and since 2013 under the revised guidance to meet PCC/Chief Constable needs. I have also worked as an independent assessor for the College of Policing and its predecessor at the national senior police recruitment and promotion centres, including at the Senior Police National Assessment Centre; for Fast Track assessment centres for serving Constables and for external graduates; and for the Direct Entry programme at Inspector and Superintendent level.

I have led and monitored numerous appointments at the equivalent of chief executive level in a range of other public sector arenas beyond policing, including in Probation, the NHS, and in the housing and education sectors.

My earlier career spanned senior management roles in local government, in housing and social care, and in the NHS, where latterly I was Director of Service Improvement for Suffolk Primary Care Trust. I have also held a range of public appointments as a Non-executive Director or Chair in a Police Authority, Probation Trust, NHS Trust, housing association and various charities. This has included at both local and national level, for example, as Chair of the National Housing Ombudsman Board and as Chair of Norfolk and Suffolk Probation Trust. I have had wide ranging leadership experience at Board level of managing major change programmes, collaborative arrangements and challenging savings plans, balancing a commitment to excellent public service with shrinking resources, all in a climate where public confidence and political accountability are key.

For the past nine years I have served as a volunteer with a project to support homeless and vulnerable young people. I also work as a volunteer for my local Citizens Advice service.