

# North Yorkshire County Council

## North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Minutes of the remote meeting held on Wednesday, 24th March, 2021 commencing at 2.00 pm.

Councillors Carl Les (North Yorkshire County Council) in the Chair; Peter Wilkinson (Hambleton District Council), Mike Chambers (Harrogate Borough Council), Richard Foster (Craven District Council), Helen Grant (Richmondshire District Council), Tim Grogan (Selby District Council), Ashley Mason (City of York Council) and Carl Maw (Scarborough Borough Council).

Community Co-opted Members: Santokh Sidhu

Officers from the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner: Julia Mulligan (Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire), Caroline Blackburn (Asst Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer), Michael Porter (Chief Financial Officer), Tom Thorp (Asst Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer) and Simon Dennis (Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer).

Officers present: Diane Parsons (Principal Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Councillors Keith Aspden (City of York Council) (Vice-Chair), Eric Hope (Ryedale District Council) and Paula Stott (Independent Co-opted Member).

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### Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

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#### 503 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted.

#### 504 Minutes of the Panel Meeting held on 22nd February 2021

##### Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### 505 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Meeting held on 22nd February 2021

No matters arising were raised by the Panel.

#### 506 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were notified to the meeting.

#### 507 Consideration of the Exclusion of the Press and Public

##### Resolved –

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Item

11 on the grounds that this involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph specified in column 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1971 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006.

**508 Progress on Issues Raised by the Panel**

Diane Parsons noted for the Panel that responses had been received from the Commissioner's office to items 1, 2, 4 and 5 on pages 9 and 10 of the paperwork. However, as the response had been received earlier that day, it was recommended that the Panel return to this paper at the next Panel meeting for proper consideration.

**Resolved –**

That the Panel reviews the update provided to this item by the Commissioner's office as part of the agenda for the next Panel meeting.

**509 Public Questions or Statements to the Panel**

The Panel were advised that no public questions or statements had been received.

**510 Members' Questions**

No questions were raised by Members of the Panel.

**511 Appointment of Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer**

The Chair clarified that the purpose of this item was to provide an opportunity for the Panel to ask the Commissioner about the context and rationale for the proposed appointment of substantive Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, as it was the first opportunity the Panel had to do so since the recruitment process had been initiated.

The Commissioner was asked why she wanted to progress making this appointment now and whether the current interim measures could be continued beyond the election period. The Commissioner highlighted that the Chief Executive is the head of paid staff for the team and that assuring some constancy over a period of change would be important for the staff. The Panel were also advised that many Commissioner colleagues nationally are similarly making new senior appointments at this time.

**512 Confirmation Hearing**

**513 Guidance for the Confirmation Hearing**

Considered –

The guidance note from the Panel Secretariat, outlining the role and process for the Panel in conducting the confirmation hearing.

**Resolved –**

That the Panel notes the guidance provided.

**514 Supporting information from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner**

Considered –

The report of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner setting out details of the recruitment process conducted and notifying the Panel of the preferred appointee, Mr Simon Dennis. The Commissioner's submission also provided a report by the independent panel member, Cindy Butts.

**Resolved –**

That the Panel notes the report provided.

**515 Personal statement from the preferred appointee**

Considered –

The personal statement provided by the preferred candidate for Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, Mr Simon Dennis

The Chair thanked Mr Dennis for providing his personal statement.

The Panel subsequently asked a number of questions of Mr Dennis in order to be reassured that the candidate would meet the standards required for the role as outlined by the Commissioner.

**Question 1: Councillor Carl Maw asked Mr Dennis how he would demonstrate that he is achieving value for taxpayers' money. Additionally – how he intended to develop and innovate effective relationships with stakeholders to make the best use of those limited resources.**

Mr Dennis referred to his work in Cleveland and having ensured good value through implementation of a 'lean' office structure. He further highlighted for Panel ongoing and emerging programmes of work in North Yorkshire which will contribute to ensuring best use of resources. These included the developing Risk and Resource Model for the Fire and Rescue Service and the Enable programme which is reviewing how services across policing and fire may be shared for greater efficiency. Mr Dennis felt that having a full-time substantive postholder in North Yorkshire would afford greater opportunities around some of this work.

**Question 2: Councillor Helen Grant asked what Mr Dennis saw as being the biggest change or challenge to be addressed in the next 12 months and why.**

Mr Dennis referred to the significant work to be tackled around consultation on the Risk and Resource Model for fire and rescue as well as the new target operating model being implemented by North Yorkshire Police. He also cited national developments around the Commissioner model further to the recent Home Office announcement following the Phase One review of this role undertaken last year. Recovery from the pandemic across the force area will continue to be a major concern. As full-time Chief Executive Mr Dennis hoped to play a greater role in developments around the Commissioner's criminal justice and reoffending work.

**Question 3: Councillor Peter Wilkinson asked how Mr Dennis would define his relationship with the Panel and how he will seek to further develop the relationship between the OPFCC and Panel.**

Mr Dennis acknowledged the importance of the relationship with the Panel and referred to the relationship already developed by him in both Cleveland and North Yorkshire with the respective Panels. He felt that the relationship between the Panel officers and OPFCC has improved in terms of quality of paperwork and timeliness of input and that he was confident it can and should be robust. He also highlighted the importance of continuing to work closely on the Panel's complaints remit.

**Question 4: Councillor Ashley Mason asked Mr Dennis if he could provide an example of where he's had to make a transition working for different senior leaders and how he ensured he maintained his independence in the process.**

Mr Dennis referred in particular to direct experience recently of moving to a new manager arrangement in Cleveland and moving to a new model of stewardship in Cleveland after the Commissioner stepped down. He cited that he was very proud of the work produced during that time. It was also highlighted that he has worked with Commissioners of different political hues and always provided strong and objective legal guidance.

**Question 5: Councillor Mike Chambers asked if an example could be provided where Mr Dennis has challenged the course of action set out by a superior.**

Mr Dennis referred to the strong advisory element of the Chief Executive relationship with the Commissioner. He highlighted that he has had a number of opportunities to advise on difficult and complex issues. Mr Dennis referred in particular to the controversial circumstances surrounding the resignation of the Chief Constable in Cleveland and that as Chief Executive, Mr Dennis advised the Commissioner on this matter and was also the recipient of concerns regarding the Chief Constable at that time. He felt he led effectively through a period of difficulty, managing a number of stakeholder interests, including the IOPC and the wider public, whose confidence it was key to maintain.

**Question 6: Councillor Tim Grogan asked Mr Dennis about his time in North Yorkshire as a part-time Chief Executive; namely what his hours had been, which had been the busier job (North Yorkshire or Cleveland) and whether he will miss his Cleveland role.**

Mr Dennis advised it had been an immense honour to serve in Cleveland for six years and that there are similarly inspiring colleagues working in North Yorkshire. The challenges between the two areas had been different, rather than one being busier than the other. He had worked on a 50/50 split between the roles and on the basis of extended hours each week. He acknowledged that there had been some compromise around that and that a full-time role will bring greater opportunities for North Yorkshire.

The Chair then invited all parties, other than Panel Members and officers supporting the Panel, to leave the meeting and the Panel went into closed session.

After a period of time of discussion, the Panel resolved that on the basis of the information provided by the Commissioner, the discussions held in the confirmation hearing and examination of the evidence in both the public meeting and closed session, the Panel is pleased to recommend the appointment of Mr Simon Dennis as Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer.

**517           Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman, should, by reason of special circumstances, be considered as a matter of urgency.**

The Panel were advised that no urgent business had been notified to the Chair.

The Chair thanked the Commissioner for all her efforts since 2012 on behalf of the communities of North Yorkshire and York and wished her well for the future.

The Chair also thanked Councillor Mason for his valued contribution to the work of the Panel, both as a Member and as a Vice Chair over the years. The Panel wish him well in his future civic role.

The meeting concluded at 2.50 pm.

DP.