

North Yorkshire County Council

North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 25th May, 2022, commencing at 2.00 pm in the Council Chamber at County Hall, Northallerton.

Councillors Carl Les in the Chair; Peter Wilkinson (Hambleton District Council), Cllr Mike Chambers (Harrogate Borough Council), Tim Grogan (Selby District Council) and Darryl Smalley (City of York Council).

Community Co-opted Members: Fraser Forsyth

In attendance: Jonathan Dyson (Interim Deputy Chief Fire Officer) (North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service).

Officers from the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner: Zoë Metcalfe (Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire), Caroline Blackburn (Asst Chief Executive & 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), Lindsay Burr MBE (Ryedale District Council), Helen Grant (Richmondshire District Council), Carl Maw (Scarborough Borough Council), Cllr Patrick Mulligan (Craven District Council).
Co-opted independent members:-, Mags Godderidge and Martin Walker.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

601 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted. Craven District Council appointed a new Member to the Panel at its annual meeting on 24th May 2022 but the appointee was not known at this stage and as such apologies from that authority were noted.

The Chair outlined that due to some urgent circumstances, the meeting would continue with the confirmation hearing for Chief Fire Officer but everything else on the agenda would be postponed for the next meeting in July 2022. The Chair emphasised that in doing so it was not the Panel's intention to minimise the gravity of the recent HMICFRS inspection report on child protection arrangements at North Yorkshire Police, but rather that in view of unavoidable circumstances, it would be preferable to consider this report when the Commissioner is able to provide more time for this discussion and when a greater number of the Panel are present.

602 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were notified.

603 Minutes of the Panel Meeting held on 16th March 2022

Resolved –

That the minutes of the informal meeting held on 16th March 2022, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

604 Consideration of the Exclusion of the Press and Public

Considered –

The exclusion of the press and public from the meeting during consideration of Item 7 on the grounds that this item would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information (information relating to an individual).

Resolved -

That the Panel will retain the privilege to retire into closed session under Item 7, if it is identified at that point in the meeting that further deliberation is required.

605 Guidance for the Confirmation Hearing

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the guidance report provided on its role and remit in respect of conducting the confirmation hearing for Chief Fire Officer.

606 Supporting information from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

Considered –

The report of the Commissioner – including the report of the Independent Panel Member – providing supporting information regarding her preferred appointment of Mr Jonathan Dyson as Chief Fire Officer.

The Commissioner highlighted that the recruitment process was conducted in line with best practice, the process was thorough and My Dyson had performed exceptionally well.

The Panel asked the Commissioner if she was surprised that only one application was received for the role. The Commissioner highlighted that the opportunities market for senior roles is very busy at present and that she was fully satisfied that the market had been thoroughly explored.

The Panel were also keen to gauge the Commissioner's confidence level that the proposed appointment would bring continuity and sustainability to the service, in view of the changes in leadership over recent years. The Commissioner sought to reassure the Panel that she believed the postholder would not be a short-term appointment and that the tenure would be sufficient to push through with much-needed changes.

Resolved –

That the Panel notes the supporting information provided by the Commissioner regarding her proposed appointee to the role of Chief Fire Officer.

Personal statement from the preferred appointee

Considered –

The personal statement provided by Mr Jonathan Dyson in support of his application to the role of Chief Fire Officer.

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

Question 1: Councillor Tim Grogan asked Mr Dyson what his personal and professional strengths are and how he felt these would help him to transition into the role of Chief Fire Officer.

Mr Dyson outlined in response that he is an ethical and values-driven leader, whose own behaviours and expectations of others are driven and motivated by his ethics and values. He likes to see social justice within the organisation and is a key advocate for diversity. He places importance on continued learning and development, both for himself and for others within the organisation and sees this as critical to adapting and empowering the workforce.

Question 2: Councillor Peter Wilkinson asked Mr Dyson what he saw as being the key priorities over the next 12 months, what he felt the biggest challenge would be and what will keep him awake at night.

Mr Dyson outlined his vision to deliver sustainability, transformation and inclusion, and that he felt all three to be strongly tied. He referred to educating staff further around identifying vulnerabilities and understanding difference in a way which enables them to not only better serve the community but also to enable the service to be attractive to a more diverse workforce. Mr Dyson felt that a collegiate, collaborative approach will be needed to help transform the service.

Question 3: Councillor Darryl Smalley asked Mr Dyson whether he could provide an example of where he has worked collaboratively with other partners to achieve a shared vision.

In response, Mr Dyson described an example whereby he had played a key role in bringing together various stakeholders within a community to cement a local vision around some funding received. As part of this project he helped to ensure that the community enhanced its voice with the local authority, parish councils and others.

Question 4: Councillor Mike Chambers asked Mr Dyson how he has approached a situation where he has been in disagreement with a senior colleague.

Mr Dyson responded with an example around his involvement in designing and implementing a duty officer system, where senior leaders disagreed with a proposed option and decided to implement a different plan. Mr Dyson outlined that the key to resolving the matter lay with focussing on the best outcome for the community, rather than focussing on the disagreements within leadership. While the disagreement led to some significant challenges from various quarters, keeping this community focus ensured the best outcome for the community.

Question 5: Councillor Carl Les asked Mr Dyson how he would make sure that the service he leads is as diverse as the community he represents.

Mr Dyson acknowledged that internal biases do exist within the service and that only

way to attract diversity is to better understand people. He felt this is part of a wider public conversation needed around mental health, lifestyle and the factors that lead to vulnerability. Educating the workforce around difference ensures that the service sees people as individuals from a risk-based perspective and as such that a better service is provided; one which will in turn attract greater diversity.

Question 6: Councillor Peter Wilkinson asked Mr Dyson how he aims to tackle the need for urgent improvements to the fire estate in view of the extremely challenging budget position.

Mr Dyson emphasised the need for prioritisation and to look at opportunities to create efficiencies, for example through Enable. Opportunities with the police need to be driven forward. Mr Dyson felt that changes to buildings must not be considered without first exploring opportunities for collaboration.

Question 7: Fraser Forsyth asked Mr Dyson if he could give an example of where he has resisted change when it appears to be done for change's sake.

Mr Dyson described an example where a service had been deemed to be efficient and effective; as such, he viewed a proposal to deliver further efficiencies as being of limited impact but which would affect morale. He respectfully disagreed with the proposal and felt that it is important when considering changes to bring people along with you and involve them in the process for forming decisions on issues.

Question 8: Councillor Tim Grogan asked Mr Dyson to clarify the line in his personal statement "*I'm a prominent and consistent leader with a near zero tolerance for misconduct*".

Mr Dyson outlined that while a clumsiness around certain language and behaviour may not be tolerated by the organisation, people sometimes deserve an opportunity to explain themselves and also sometimes need support to educate them around appropriate language etc. At times it will be appropriate to dismiss staff but at other points a more supportive or guiding approach is needed.

Having concluded the hearing, the Panel resolved not to move into closed session.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chair moved that based on the statement provided by Mr Dyson, the supporting information from the Commissioner and Mr Dyson's responses to the Panel's questions, the Panel is pleased to endorse Mr Jonathan Dyson in the role of Chief Fire Officer. This was seconded.

The Chair thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting and brought the Panel meeting to a close.

Resolved –

That the Panel endorses the Commissioner's preferred appointee, Mr Jonathan Dyson, in the role of Chief Fire Officer to the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The meeting concluded at 2.30 pm.

DP.