

North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

22 February 2021

Recruitment of Independent Co-opted Members

Purpose of the report

1. To agree membership of a task group to progress work to recruit two people to be Independent Co-opted ("Community") members of the Panel.

Background

2. Members will recall that a paper was brought to the Panel in February 2020, highlighting that the term of office for the Panel's two Independent Co-opted Members was due to expire in October 2020 and seeking agreement to a recruitment process. A copy of this paper is provided again for information at Appendix A.
3. This process was to be overseen by a task group comprising Members of the Panel, with the aim of selecting two appointees to formally propose to the Panel in October 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Panel agreed via email in April 2020 not to pursue a recruitment exercise but instead to extend the term of the incumbent Independent Co-opted Members by a year to October 2021.
4. It is proposed that the agreement to conduct the process to the timescales agreed last year is used for the recruitment this year, namely:
 - a. Task group to meet late March or April to agree recruitment pack, targeting of materials and consider who will shortlist applicants;
 - b. Vacancies to be advertised in early May 2021;
 - c. Interviews to be held with a small group of Members in July 2021;
 - d. Proposed appointments to be put to Panel mid-October 2021.

At least some of these elements will need to be conducted remotely.

5. As there have been some changes in Panel membership and in Panel roles since the task group membership was previously discussed, it would be helpful for Members to agree who will now be involved on this group. It is proposed that no more than five Members sit on this group.

Diane Parsons
Panel Secretariat
North Yorkshire County Council

10th February 2021

Background documents:

Appendix A – Recruitment of Independent Co-opted Members (PFC Panel paper – 6th February 2020)

North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

6 February 2020

Recruitment of Independent Co-opted Members

Purpose of the report

1. To recommend a process for selecting two people to be Independent Co-opted ("Community") members of the Panel.

Background

2. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 requires that at least two members of the Panel are co-opted by the Panel and are independent, that is they are not a:
 - member of the staff of the police, fire and crime commissioner for North Yorkshire;
 - member of the civilian staff of the area police force;
 - member of staff of the fire and rescue authority (as applicable where the Commissioner has assumed governance);
 - Member of Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, the Scottish Parliament or the European Parliament; or
 - member of a local authority which is covered by the force area.
3. Guidance from the Home Office also indicates that serving police officers should not be eligible to serve as a member of a Panel.¹
4. The Panel's Arrangements set out that co-opted Members appointed to the Panel may be re-appointed for a further term of four years provided that the balanced appointment objective is met by that re-appointment. The balanced appointment objective in this regard is concerned with the Panel having the necessary balance of skills, knowledge and expertise to ensure the effective functioning of the Panel.
5. The term for the two current co-opted members to the Panel ends prior to the October 2020 meeting of the Panel; that is, once appointments have been offered in the summer, they will need to be formally agreed through the Panel at its meeting of 15th October 2020.

Process when appointing independent co-opted members

6. The Panel arrangements (paragraph 4.23) state that:

"The Panel shall put in place arrangements to ensure that appointments of co-opted Members are undertaken following public advertisement in accordance with the following principles:

¹ Under section 1(2)(a) of Schedule 1 to the Police Regulations 2003 (S.I. 2003/527) a member of a police force may not "take any active part in politics". The Home Office would regard co-option to a Panel, for the purpose of scrutinising an elected PFCC, as taking an active part in politics, and accordingly as being prohibited for police officers.

- a) *The appointment will be made on merit of candidates whose skills, experience and qualities are considered best to ensure the effective functioning of the Panel;*
 - b) *The selection process must be fair, objective, impartial and consistently applied to all candidates who will be assessed against the same predetermined criteria; and,*
 - c) *The selection process will be conducted transparently with information about the requirements for the appointment and the process being publicly advertised and made available with a view to attracting a strong and diverse field of suitable candidates.”*
7. LGA guidance (published 2012) sets out that “planning for the appointment of co-optees must take account of the fact that the panel will need to be involved at key points in the process of seeking, short-listing and appointing co-optees”.
 8. The process for appointing the independent co-opted members in 2016 started before the end of March with the creation of a small task group of Panel Members, whose role it was to oversee the arrangements for recruitment and selection, which were administered through the County Council.
 9. The vacancies were advertised widely via press releases, websites and relevant networks in early May 2016, including parish council networks, the voluntary and community sector, community safety partnerships and health sector publications. Interviews were held in July 2016.
 10. By initiating this work in early spring, the newly-appointed independent co-opted members were able to begin their induction to the Panel prior to the October 2016 meeting and as such this also benefited the continued effective functioning of the Panel.

Next steps in appointing independent co-opted members for 2020

11. The Panel is invited to consider conducting a similar process for the recruitment, shortlisting and interviewing of two members for when the period of office of the current two individuals expires at the beginning of October 2020.
12. In terms of the position as regards the current members, Santokh Sidhu will have served the maximum tenure of eight years in October 2020. Paula Stott has served a single term and as such may apply again.
13. Given the size of the Panel and the potential for a reasonable number of applications to be received, it would be impractical for the entire Panel to be involved in every stage of the process.

Recommended

14. The Panel appoint a task group of no more than five Panel members, in accordance with the Panel rules of procedure, to:
 - review the application pack material and recommend changes where appropriate;

- oversee the arrangements for recruitment;
 - agree the shortlisting of applicants to around five or six for interview;
 - interview all shortlisted applicants (only three of the five members need serve); and
 - agree two applicants to be recommended to the Panel for co-option.
15. The task group should ideally comprise the Chair and Vice Chairs (if willing and available), plus two further Members of the wider Panel.
16. The process be concluded by no later than the end of September so that the task group recommendations can be considered at the October 2020 meeting.

Diane Parsons
Principal Scrutiny Officer
North Yorkshire County Council

28th January 2020

Background Documents:

None.