

To: Chair & Members

North Yorkshire Police, Fire & Crime Panel

12 June 2024

Personal Statement – Jo Coles

Chair, Members

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement in support of my proposed appointment as York and North Yorkshire's Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime. I am conscious that I make this statement at a time of heightened political sensitivity following the calling of the General Election, so I have focussed on how I can add value to commitments and ambitions already in the public domain as part of the Mayoral Combined Authority, as well as the existing strategic plans for policing, fire and crime. I will also use this statement to set out my personal background and experience and how I think this will support me in this role.

With your approval, to be successful in this role, I will work closely with Mayor David Skaith and other partners across the region and beyond to ensure that York and North Yorkshire is a region where residents, visitors and businesses feel safe.

In preparation for this role I have spoken to the office-holder in the predecessor role, Zoe Metcalfe, as well as to Chief Constable Tim Forber and to Mayor Skaith. I intend to speak to Chief Fire Officer Dyson prior to the hearing. I place huge value on advice and evidence from others. These conversations to date and going forward with many others will inform the priorities and decision making I have to take. At the forefront of my mind is how to best keep our area safe, being a voice for the public and ensuring North Yorkshire Police and North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service are the very best that they can be.

Like Mayor Skaith, I believe in being tough on crime and antisocial behaviour. The recent inspections of both services demonstrate how committed officers are, but also the areas for improvement. Community confidence through timely and appropriate response for example is vital to reassure residents that services will be there if needed. Non-reporting is of real concern because it points to a lack of faith that anything can or will be done. Mayor Skaith and I will work alongside the leadership teams of both services to improve public trust. This is a particularly important for the victims of serious crimes such as domestic abuse, sexual or other violent crime where it's not just about an emergency response time but also about follow up services and support.

Our region has particular challenges so we will also seek to improve our rural crime task force, working with neighbouring forces on cross-border offending to identify those travelling into York and North Yorkshire and how technology can assist in crime detection and prevention.

We also believe strongly in the importance of addressing the causes and effects of crime across our urban, rural and coastal communities. Tackling some of the most intractable issues such as substance abuse, serious violence and mental health are key to delivering long-term improvements to community safety for our region. From my experience on the Executive of City of York Council, I am keen to better understand how a public health approach could be used, focusing on early intervention and prevention. I would also seek to properly understand 'what works' to assist perpetrators to address their offending behaviour.

Mayor Skaith and I particularly want to prevent offending and address its root causes. Youth offending is increasing nationally, including in York and North Yorkshire. Having worked in the youth sector over a number of years, I know how important youth provision is in providing meaningful activities and opportunities that can divert potential offenders. We have seen the success of the 'Clear, Hold, Build' initiative in Scarborough and in York. Mayor Skaith and I will seek to identify every opportunity to provide meaningful activities for young people that could divert them away from offending. The financial picture is challenging, but we will be innovative and look at what works and most importantly, what works here.

All members of the public have a right to feel safe. Serious and organised crime is unfortunately not only a phenomenon of large metropolitan areas, it has permeated the towns and villages of North Yorkshire too. County Lines drug dealing, doesn't only exploit the most vulnerable, it brings with it violence, misery and serious harm onto the streets of York and North Yorkshire. Our response to these policing challenges needs to include smart, intelligence-driven crime detection as well as the vital insights that only come from neighbourhood policing. I would work closely with both forces and with the local councils, community leaders and partners to ensure we have a shared approach that builds community resilience.

My professional experience has included extensive periods of time in public service, as well as the private and voluntary sectors. I worked for 6 years in the youth sector and more recently for 4 years for a specialist crime and justice consultancy, Crest Advisory, including work for PCCs with a range of political affiliations, as well as providing support for independent public inquiries. As an elected local councillor, I represent the ward of Westfield, the most deprived ward in the City of York, and among the most deprived in our region. I am committed to improving outcomes for the most vulnerable in

our communities and am committed to ensuring their needs are fairly represented. I am committed to building public confidence amongst all our diverse communities in their policing and fire services.

York & North Yorkshire has already made significant progress in its delivery of a multi-agency strategy to address crimes which disproportionately affect women and girls. I would like to pay tribute to Zoe Metcalfe for her work in pushing this agenda during the 3 years she served as Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. I will seek to build on the progress made, learning further lessons from other areas and where possible, bringing criminal justice partners more closely together to build the confidence of all victims of crime. If confirmed in post I will work closely with Mayor Skaith to consult the public on future Police, Fire & Crime Plans.

The York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, of which the Deputy Mayor with responsibility for Police, Fire and Crime is part, is a huge opportunity for our region. Devolution offers us the chance to invest locally in skills, employment, housing, transport to support the wider economic prosperity of our region. For the first time we have the chance here in York and North Yorkshire to improve the life chances of all our residents, to tackle some of the root causes of disadvantage and to improve community safety and confidence in public services.

We are still at the start of our devolution journey. As other regions have shown, there may be further devolutionary opportunities from national government, which could bring further benefits to York and North Yorkshire. Further steps have to be driven by evidence.

Changes also have to be in the interest of people in York and North Yorkshire - and significant changes will always be decided in proper consultation with the public. Mayor Skaith's mandate is to deliver positive outcomes for the whole of the York & North Yorkshire region, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, delivering more affordable housing and business support, improving health outcomes locally and improving the connectivity of our communities.

The nomination to the role of Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime is an opportunity to serve the people of York and North Yorkshire. It is a chance to provide strategic leadership, working alongside some of the best policing, fire and crime professionals in the country. It is a huge honour to be considered for this role. If approved for appointment, I will do my utmost to build on the important work that has taken place to date, striving to ensure we have a strong partnership locally and within the Combined Authority, through the partnership landscape regionally and nationally to deliver the best possible outcomes for our communities.

4 June 2024