

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL
REPORT TO THE POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER
FOR NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

28 JANUARY 2025

Report Title	Review of the proposed appointment by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire of a Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police
Report Author	For Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel: James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager West Northamptonshire Council James.edmunds@westnorthants.gov.uk

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The report is intended to set out the results of the review by the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire's proposed appointment of a Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire is responsible for appointing the Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police. When the Commissioner proposes to make an appointment to this position the Police, Fire and Crime Panel must hold a confirmation hearing to review the proposed appointment in order to make a recommendation on it. This report sets out the results of a confirmation hearing held by the Panel on 27 January 2025 concerning the proposed appointment of Mr Ivan Balhatchet as Chief Constable.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel recommends:
- a) That the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire appoints Mr Ivan Balhatchet as Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police.
 - b) That the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner notifies the Panel of her decision whether to accept or reject its recommendation in accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 schedule 8 paragraph 7(3).

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The recommendations are required to complete the Panel's review of the proposed appointment by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner of a Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police, in accordance with the Panel's statutory responsibilities.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 Section 38 specifies that the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for a police area is to appoint the chief constable of the police force for that area.
- 5.2 Schedule 8 of the 2011 Act requires that a PCC must notify the relevant Police and Crime panel of the proposed appointment of a chief constable. In such cases the PCC must also notify the Police and Crime panel of the following information:
- a) The name of the person whom the PCC is proposing to appoint ("the candidate");
 - b) The criteria used to assess the suitability of the candidate for the appointment;
 - c) Why the candidate satisfies those criteria; and
 - d) The terms and conditions on which the candidate is to be appointed.
- 5.3 The Police and Crime Panel must review the proposed appointment at a confirmation hearing. A confirmation hearing is defined as: "A meeting of the Panel, held in public, at which the candidate is requested to appear for the purpose of answering questions relating to the appointment."
- 5.4 The Police and Crime panel must make a report to the PCC stating the outcome of the review. In the case of the proposed appointment of a chief constable the Panel must make a recommendation as to whether or not the candidate should be appointed. Alternatively, the Panel may resolve to veto the proposed appointment, if at least two-thirds of the people who are members of the Police and Crime panel at the time vote in favour of making that decision.
- 5.5 The PCC may accept or reject the Police and Crime panel's recommendation as to whether or not the candidate should be appointed. The PCC must notify the Panel of their decision on the Panel's recommendation. In the event that the Panel vetoes the PCC's proposed appointment the PCC must not appoint that candidate. The PCC must then propose a reserve candidate, whose appointment will be subject to review at a further confirmation hearing.
- 5.6 The Police and Crime panel must publish its report to the PCC, although it is for the Panel to decide the manner in which the report is published.

6. Review of the proposed appointment of a Chief Constable

- 6.1 The Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel met in public on 27 January 2025 to hold a confirmation hearing concerning the proposed appointment of Mr Ivan Balhatchet as Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police.
- 6.2 The Panel was provided with information about the proposed appointment ahead of the confirmation hearing. This included the information referred to in paragraph 5.2 above. The report on the proposed appointment presented to the Panel by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner is available to view at the following link: [Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Agenda 27 January 2025](#).
- 6.3 At the confirmation hearing the Panel asked questions of Mr Balhatchet, intended to enable Panel members to evaluate his suitability for the role. In accordance with relevant guidance these questions focussed on the areas of professional competence (: the candidate's ability to carry out the role) and personal independence (: the need for the candidate to act in a manner that is operationally independent of the PCC). The questions covered the following areas:
- What most attracted Mr Balhatchet to the opportunity to serve as Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police.
 - Perceptions of the main challenges facing Northamptonshire Police and what Mr Balhatchet would take from his previous professional experience to enable him to address these challenges effectively.
 - The actions that Mr Balhatchet would take as Chief Constable to put Northamptonshire Police in the best position to improve its overall effectiveness, particularly in those areas of policing where it was currently rated by HMICFRS as 'requires improvement'.
 - Approaches to ensuring that Northamptonshire Police and its personnel operate in a way that maximised trust and confidence in their integrity and standards of conduct across all local communities.
 - How Mr Balhatchet would work as the operational leader of Northamptonshire Police to support the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's strategic mission to deliver visible and accessible community services in the county, including by reinvigorating neighbourhood policing.
 - Perceptions of the key factors that would enable Northamptonshire Police to use its financial resources as effectively as possible.
 - The principles that Mr Balhatchet would apply to enable Northamptonshire Police to establish a workforce culture that supported and got the best from individuals whilst also achieving necessary performance.
 - Approaches to Northamptonshire Police's involvement in partnership working, both with other emergency services and in broader areas of activity, to support the delivery of national and local priorities.

- Experience of leading national thinking or policy within a specific area of policing and successfully contributing to the continuous improvement of policing practice.
- How Mr Balhatchet would seek to develop and maintain a productive strategic relationship with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner that also took account of the different responsibilities of the two roles.
- The future working relationship between the Panel and the Chief Constable.
- The results that Mr Balhatchet most wanted to achieve if appointed as Chief Constable.

6.4 The confirmation hearing was webcast live and the recording is available to view at the following link: [Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel - 27 January 2025](#).

7. Outcome of the Review

7.1 After questioning Mr Balhatchet and taking account of the other information provided to the Panel, members expressed support for his appointment as Chief Constable. Panel members commented that Mr Balhatchet's answers to questions at the confirmation hearing had shown refreshing candour and openness about areas where Northamptonshire Police needed to improve and a sense for responsibility for addressing these. It was felt that Mr Balhatchet could bring strong capabilities and experience to the role. He had held significant command responsibilities with the Metropolitan Police and had led influential work on issues such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Mr Balhatchet's track record of involvement in partnership working was welcomed and it was felt that this could be valuable in delivering shared priorities in the county. Panel member's further highlighted that Mr Balhatchet's answers to questions gave confidence that he and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner would be able to work together effectively to deliver priorities set out in the Commissioner's Police, Fire and Crime Plan. A focus on supporting Northamptonshire Police personnel had also been a key theme of his answers. Finally, Panel members saw a great benefit in the fact that Mr Balhatchet would be a Chief Constable who had been born and brought up in Northamptonshire. It was powerful to be able to say that he was responsible for delivering services that protected his own family as well as others. Mr Balhatchet's local connection gave a sense of commitment that could sometimes seem absent from senior appointments and should contribute to the stability that Northamptonshire Police needed at the current time. Mr Balhatchet would be judged and held to account as Chief Constable for what he delivered on priorities such as strengthening neighbourhood policing. However, Panel members supported that he should be given the opportunity to do so.

7.2 At the conclusion of discussion the Panel resolved unanimously:

To recommend that the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire appoints Mr Ivan Balhatchet as Chief Constable of Northamptonshire Police.

[Mr Andy Frost, independent member, did not participate in the vote by the Panel due to his previous professional connection with Mr Balhatchet from shared service with Northamptonshire Police].

8. Background Papers

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

The Police and Crime Panels (Precepts and Chief Constable Appointments) Regulations 2012

Police and Crime Panels Guidance on Confirmation Hearings Local Government Association and Centre for Public Scrutiny (August 2012)