



Cllr Paul Middlebrough
Chairman, West Mercia Police and Crime Panel
c/o Legal and Democratic Services
Worcestershire County Council
County Hall
Spetchley Road
Worcester WR5 2NP

Bill Longmore
Police and Crime Commissioner
West Mercia

12 December 2012

Dear Mr Middlebrough

CONFIRMATION HEARING: PROPOSED APPOINTMENT OF MR BARRIE SHELDON TO THE OFFICE OF DEPUTY POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Thank you for your letter of 11 December 2012 setting out the views and recommendation of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel.

I note that the Panel support the appointment of a Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner.

I am also grateful that the Panel recognise that by virtue of the 2011 Act the normal competition procedures attaching to senior appointments were specifically disapplied and that while they would have preferred that I had adopted a competitive process they also recognise that the process which I followed was a perfectly lawful and proper one.

The process also has transparency. The confirmation process itself is perhaps one of the most transparent procedures attaching to any public office appointment.

I note that the Panel do not recommend the Appointment of Mr Barrie Sheldon.

I have carefully noted the content of your letter and would wish to respond as follows:-

I strongly reject the criticism repeated in your letter that I have breached any of the Nolan Principles. I fear that I did not make sufficiently clear to the Panel that Mr Sheldon is neither a family member nor a long-standing friend of mine. I have made no secret that I knew Mr Sheldon as a colleague, indeed as a junior police officer in my old Force, but I had no contact with him whatever after my leaving the Police service over 25 years ago until I sought his assistance with my election campaign.

My close association with Mr Sheldon only arose following my decision to stand as a Police and Crime Commissioner candidate I became aware that Mr Sheldon was undertaking a lecturing role with Teesside University in Policing Matters. I thought Mr Sheldon might provide me with useful guidance and assistance in my campaign and when I approached him he agreed to do so.

During the election period I formed the view that Mr Sheldon would be a huge help to me in my Police and Crime Commissioner duties should I be elected. Following election I confirmed my view that I needed a Deputy and that Mr Sheldon, sharing my values and that having a range of valuable skills and insights he would be an ideal Deputy to assist me.

As to Mr Sheldon's personal qualities, I note the Panel felt that Mr Sheldon does not fulfil one of the five criteria specified in my letter of 28 November; specifically that Mr Sheldon did not complement my own skills. In my opinion Mr Sheldon does indeed complement my own skill set. After 1986 for some 12 years I operated a commercial business and more recently I have worked extensively in the community. My policing background therefore goes back some 25 years. By contrast Mr Sheldon's policing knowledge is entirely up to date. Moreover, I also consider that he meets all criteria I have specified and, importantly he has my full confidence both in his shared values, his integrity and his communication skills. To characterise us both as former Police Officers fails to recognise my own considerable non-policing experience and the up-to-date policing knowledge of Mr Sheldon.

As to the criticism that Mr Sheldon does not provide sufficient financial acumen, I must point out that the former Police Authority provided a structure of posts which included both a Chief Finance Officer and a supporting Finance Officer. I am adopting and strengthening those structures to ensure strong professional financial advice is available to me. I also have access to the force Finance Director and her team and the audit staff provided by Worcestershire County Council.

As already mentioned, I myself have operated a successful business in the private sector for a period of some 12 years with a considerable turnover (over £1m per annum prior to sale), while my work in the community has been widely recognised (including a BBC award in 2011). Neither I nor Mr Sheldon can claim to have previously exercised governance and oversight over such a significant public sector budget; to have done so almost inevitably would have required a political background. I believe my election demonstrated, in part, the wish of the public not to have politics involved in police governance.

Another criticism not formally reflected in your letter, was that Mr Sheldon based in Telford and myself based in Shropshire would find it difficult to fully engage with other geographic areas such as Worcestershire or Herefordshire. As I emphasised to the Panel, as Police and Crime Commissioner I will represent the interests of all West Mercia areas and my Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner will do the same. However I am persuaded that the issue of improved geographic representation ought to be addressed and I intend therefore to explore how that might be remedied.

The Panel is critical of the clarity around the role of the Deputy and the salary I have decided to apply. I note the Panel support the need for a Deputy post in West Mercia. Given that the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner covers much of the ground formerly discharged by a 17 member Police Authority it is hardly surprising that Police and Crime Commissioners across the country are making Deputy appointments and further strengthening their teams to ensure that they can properly discharge their responsibilities. All the more so given the wider role discharged by Police and Crime Commissioners compared to former Police Authorities.

As to defining the Deputy role more precisely, at this time I propose to draw on my Deputy to support me across the entire breadth of my responsibilities but I am certain, as we develop the Police and Crime Plan and its implementation, that specific areas of responsibility will become more clearly defined. However, the current wide brief is intentional on my part.

The terms and conditions of appointment broadly follow standard terms applicable to police staff. They were finalised following consultation with the Force HR Department.

As to the salary point, I can only confirm that given the full time nature of the position and its level of responsibility I consider the salary both reasonable and appropriate. In making this appointment and any others I may decide are needed in the future I shall always keep in mind my intention to ensure the comparable costs of my Office do not exceed those which attached to the former Police Authority.

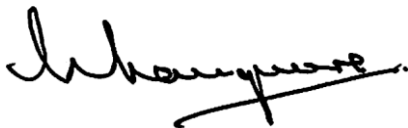
The Panel invites me to consider making the appointment of my Deputy a fixed term contract for one year. I have considered that but do not accept it. The position is in any event co-terminus with my own period of office but I have introduced an additional condition that my Deputy would be appointed subject to immediate termination by notice should I wish to end the appointment at any time. I consider that is a more flexible and satisfactory arrangement.

In conclusion, I have carefully considered the recommendations of the Panel and their comments but I have decided to proceed with the appointment of Mr Sheldon as my Deputy with immediate effect. I hope my remarks set out why I feel it is both justified and proper for me to proceed with this appointment.

I do hope this letter will go some way to assure the Panel that my decision is based on a sound approach and that in Mr Sheldon I do have a selfless individual of considerable skill and background who will work tirelessly to deliver strong policing services and engagement with partners and the public at a time of increasing financial restraint.

I do hope that together Mr Sheldon and I can work co-operatively with the Panel to deliver the very best policing and community safety outcomes possible given all the challenges we face.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W Longmore', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

W Longmore