

# CHIEF EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT UPDATE

## Chief Officer Sub Committee – 10 March 2021

Report of: Interim Executive Head of Corporate Resources

Purpose: For decision

Publication status: Unrestricted with restricted appendix (in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 – paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A)

Wards affected: All

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### Executive summary:

This report provides advice to support the Sub Committee to shortlist candidates for the role of Chief Executive for final interview and asks for agreement of next steps in relation to the role of Acting Chief Executive.

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**This report supports the Council's priority of:** Building a better Council

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### Recommendation to Sub-Committee:

That the Sub Committee:

- A. Confirm the shortlist of candidates for final interviews for the post of Chief Executive, following review and discussion of information appearing on Part B of this meeting's agenda;
- B. Agree to extend the appointment of Jackie King in the post of Acting Chief Executive until 15 July 2021 or the arrival in post of the new permanent Chief Executive, whichever is the sooner.

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### Reason for recommendation:

To progress the recruitment of the Chief Executive and to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the role of Head of Paid Service pending the arrival of the new postholder.

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## **Introduction and background**

1. At meetings on 13 November and 14 January, COSC agreed to progress the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive.

## **Progress update**

2. The recruitment process has been progressed as follows:
  - Advertisement of the post online and in print with the MJ (the title with the greatest reach of senior local authority professionals) and online via the Sunday Times and LinkedIn in addition to promotion via Solace in Business
  - Executive search conducted by Solace in Business
  - An informal meeting of COSC considered a detailed assessment of all applications and identified 6 candidates to be called forward to initial technical interview
3. At the time of writing this report, those 6 candidates were due to be interviewed by Solace in Business and the Council's technical adviser, Rob Tinlin, to assess their technical knowledge and suitability for the post.
4. A report by Solace in Business, setting out the detailed assessment of each candidate following technical interviews, appears in an appendix to the report on Part B of this meeting's agenda.
5. The Committee is asked to review this report and to confirm the shortlist of candidates for final interviews.

## **Extension to appointment of Acting Chief Executive**

6. The Sub Committee, at its meeting on 13 November 2020, agreed that Jackie King remain in the post of Acting Chief Executive for a period of up to 6 months: i.e. to mid May 2021.
7. Many candidates for the role of Chief Executive will be contractually required to give three months' notice to their current employer, following the completion of all required checks and receipt of a formal offer of employment. If Full Council agrees to a recommendation by the Sub Committee to appoint a preferred candidate at its meeting on 18 March, it is therefore likely that the successful candidate would not be in a position to take up their post until early to mid July 2021.
8. Further information relating to the appointment of the Acting Chief Executive appears on Part B of this meeting's agenda.

## **Options considered**

9. The Sub Committee will consider all options at the meeting, including:
  - i) which and how many candidates to shortlist or
  - ii) whether to proceed to hold final interviews.

## **Next steps**

10. All candidates shortlisted by the Sub Committee will be invited to attend an assessment centre (via Zoom) at which they will undertake a range of exercises designed to test their suitability for the role.

11. The Sub Committee will then receive a detailed report from Solace in Business to inform final interviews, to be conducted by the Sub Committee on 15 and 16 March.
12. The Sub Committee, when considering whether to recommend a candidate for appointment, will need to consider:
  - The Council's policy is to appoint at the bottom of the salary scale, or near the bottom taking into account the relevant skills and experience of the person appointed.
  - The permanent role of Chief Executive has been advertised showing the current payscale for the role (£115,000 to £130,000)
  - The current budget for the post is £122,000.
13. If the Sub Committee decides to recommend a candidate for appointment, a special meeting of Full Council will be held on 18 March to consider the Sub Committee's recommendation.

## **Key implications**

### **Comments of the Chief Finance Officer (s151)**

The Council has a duty to ensure its expenditure does not exceed resources available. Although significant progress has been made over the last few months to improve the Council's financial position, the medium-term financial outlook is uncertain. The pandemic has resulted in increased costs which may not be fully funded in the current year. With uncertainty about the ongoing impact of this and no clarity on the extent to which both central and local funding sources might be affected from next year onward, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority, in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium-term.

The s151 officer recognises that the recruitment of a permanent Chief Executive is critical to ensuring future stability of the Council and is fully supportive of the approach outlined in this report. However, there is only £122k budgeted for this post plus oncosts in 2021/22 and any amount agreed over this will need to be met by underspends elsewhere in the budget.

### **Comments of the Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)**

The Council may generally appoint staff as it considers necessary for the proper discharge of its functions on such reasonable terms and conditions, including remuneration, as the Council thinks fit.

Section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended), states that the Council has a legal duty to appoint an officer as Head of Paid Service. This role is fulfilled for the Council by the Chief Executive.

The quality of leadership at an organisation has a direct impact on the effectiveness and productiveness of that organisation. It is therefore important that due consideration is given to the requirements of the role and that the appointment is appointed on merit. This means that the Council must be satisfied that the person appointed to this role must be suitable in terms of their qualifications, skills and experience to carry out a job of this nature.

As the report suggests, the Executive Leadership Team have not been asked to be involved in the recruitment process.

It is considered essential that the Council seeks to make a permanent appointment to the role of Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service at the earliest opportunity. The Interim arrangements outlined in this report should be considered to be appropriate on a short-term basis pending the completion of the recruitment process.

### **Equality**

There are no equalities implications directly arising from this report. The recruitment of the Chief Executive is complying with all relevant policies and legislation.

### **Climate change**

There are no climate change implications arising directly from this report.

**Appendices** (confidential and not for publication in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 – paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A):

Appendix A – report of the Interim Executive Head of Corporate Resources

Appendix B – Short list report from Solace in Business (to follow)

### **Background papers**

None.