

**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
25 AUGUST 2020**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: RECRUITMENT TO ROLES OF RETURNING OFFICER/ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER AND SERVICE DIRECTOR TRANSFORMATION

REPORT OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCIL PRIORITY: BE A MORE WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE COUNCIL

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the background to the process for recruitment thus far and the recommendations for the statutory post of Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer and to the part-time, fixed term, new Service Director Transformation post.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Employment Committee interview the candidates for the two roles.
- 2.2. That the Employment Committee note the content of this report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. The details of the two roles are contained in the part 2 report, this report sets out the background.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. The statutory roles of Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer (RO/ERO) were previously held by the Chief Executive. During the recent senior management changes that created the Managing Director post it was decided to separate the roles of RO and ERO from the Head of Paid Service and consider the different options for undertaking these functions. Consultation on the proposal has been carried out with relevant staff.
- 4.2. The Service Director Transformation post was created to deliver upon some of the recommendations from the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC). Alternative options such as a permanent post, number of hours and delivering transformation through the current structure were considered but discounted. On balance it was considered that the proposed fixed term, part time, role provided the best balance of impact and cost.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The Leader was consulted on the proposal for the RO/ERO role prior to commencement of the consultation with relevant staff.
- 5.2. Cabinet and Full Council in approving the CPC Action Plan agreed to the creation of, and budget for, the Service Director Transformation post.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The RO/ERO roles have previously been held by the Council's Chief Executive. This has been reviewed in the light of the changes that created the Managing Director role. The clear view of the previous Chief Executive was that the roles should be held elsewhere in the organisation, due to the pressures on the Head of Paid Service role. Consultation on the proposed approach has been undertaken with relevant staff. The consultation has been paused pending interview by the Employment Committee of the proposed RO/ERO. In the interim, as set out in the constitution, the Service Director Legal and Community has been Acting RO/ERO. Attached at Appendix A are extracts from the Electoral Commission's guidance on RO roles and responsibilities (full document https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf_file/LGEW-MAY-RO-Part-A-role-and-responsibilities.pdf) and ERO roles and responsibilities (full details <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/running-electoral-registration-england/your-role-and-responsibilities-electoral-registration-officer>).
- 7.2. As stated in paragraph 4.2 the Service Director Transformation post has been created as part of the response to the CPC recommendations. The initial scope for the transformation programme is attached at Appendix B. In accordance with the Cabinet and Council recommendations this initial scope was agreed by the Leader, Deputy Leader, Executive Member for Finance and IT, Service Director Resources and the Managing Director.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer

- 8.1 The RO is the person who has overall responsibility for the conduct of any elections held within the district (ie both district and parish council elections). They are an officer of the council who is appointed under the Representation of the People Act 1983 ('the Act'). The ERO is a person who has the statutory duty to compile and maintain the electoral roll, which includes conducting the annual canvass. This is also a position that has to be appointed under the Act. Further details are contained in Appendix A.

Service Director Transformation

- 8.2 Prior to creating the role the scope for the initial transformation programme was created (see paragraph 7.2 above). A job description and person specification were then created to deliver the programme. These are attached at Appendices C and D.

8.3 The role was advertised internally only, on the basis that there were known to be a good pool of potential candidates. Early recruitment also meant that if no suitable candidate was identified internally then the exercise could be re-run for external candidates.

8.4 The advert was posted on 17 July 2020, with a deadline of 3 August 2020. At the initial stage candidates had to complete an application form which was assessed at the shortlisting stage. Shortlisted candidates were then asked to complete online literacy and numeracy tests.

8.5 The next stage was a written test which candidates were given one hour to complete:

The transformation programme initial scope includes 'Investigate and establish the opportunities for better use of data and data analytics to improve the basis for our decision making and service delivery'. Produce a briefing note to explain the opportunities you believe exist for the Council to make better use of its data.

8.6 Finally the candidates attended an interview with a panel of three, during which they had to provide a presentation and answer competency based questions from the panel. The presentation question was:

The Council has as one of its priorities "Continuing to be a welcoming, inclusive and efficient Council. How can the transformation programme deliver against that priority?"

8.7 Due to the pandemic all stages of the recruitment process were conducted online, with the panel interviews conducted via video conferencing.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. The Council's Constitution sets out the terms of reference for the Employment Committee which states at 10.3.4(b) "To interview and appoint candidates for the posts of Service Director, and to interview and recommend to Council the appointment of Monitoring Officer, Chief Finance Officer and Returning Officer/ Electoral Registration Officer."

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. Full Council has previously approved the fees for the RO role, and the transformation budget which includes the staffing budget. Prior to the creation of the Service Director roles in 2018 the posts were subject to an external job evaluation exercise by Hay to determine the salary level for each post. The new post is consistent with the salary for the permanent service director posts, pro-rated as it is part-time.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1. The proposals contained within this report for future senior management arrangements of the Authority have regard to the adopted risk and opportunities framework in seeking to ensure that the Council manages its risks in an efficient and effective manner.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. The Council's Recruitment Policies are developed and consulted upon in a way which complies with the Equalities Act 2010.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The Human Resources Implications are contained within the body of the report. The Human Resources Services Manager played a full role in the recruitment as part of the recruiting panel.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Roles and responsibilities for RO and ERO
- 16.2 Appendix B – Initial Scope for Transformation Programme
- 16.3 Appendix C – Service Director Transformation Job Description
- 16.4 Appendix D – Service Director Transformation Person Specification

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None.