

Report of:	Chief Executive
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Portfolio Leader:	Leader of the Council
Report Track:	Council: 27/04/22

Council
27 April 2022
Senior Management Recruitment and Appointments

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek approval for the recruitment and appointment of two Heads of Service positions and to advise on changes to two shared Heads of Service postholders.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Council is asked to approve:
- (i) Commencement of the recruitment of a full-time permanent s151 Officer/Deputy Chief Executive;
 - (ii) the appointment of a recruitment agency to support the search for and recruitment of a s151 Officer / Deputy Chief Executive; and
 - (iii) the inclusion of a Member representative from Stafford Borough Council on the appointments panel.
- 2.2 Council is also asked to approve the permanent appointment of Mr Presland to the post of Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles.
- 2.3 In addition, Council is asked to note the forthcoming retirement of two of the shared Heads of Service from Stafford Borough Council and the intention to cover these on an interim basis pending the completion of the business case for a wider sharing of services.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendations

Key Issues

- 3.1 Two Heads of Service positions have been covered on an interim basis since the retirement of the previous postholders in 2021 pending the completion of the shared services business case. However, circumstances have changed since the

arrangements were put in place and it is no longer considered viable to continue these appointments on an interim basis.

3.2 The post of Head of Finance and Deputy Managing Director is currently being covered:

- on a part-time basis by an interim agency appointment for the finance aspect of the role; and
- The deputy managing director element is being covered on an interim basis by the Head of Governance & Corporate Services as part of the arrangements approved by Council relating to the sharing of the Chief Executive of Stafford Borough Council.

It is proposed to commence a recruitment process, using a specialist agency, to the role of s151 Officer and Deputy Chief Executive on a permanent basis.

3.3 The post of Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles is being covered on an interim basis by Mr Presland, Waste & Engineering Services Manager. Having covered the position successfully for 12 months, it is proposed to appoint Mr Presland to the post on a permanent basis. This will allow for a recruitment process to commence for his substantive service manager role, which is currently being covered on a part-time casual basis.

3.4 Two of the shared Heads of Service employed by Stafford Borough Council (the Heads of Human Resources and Technology) have announced their intention to retire during 2022. It is proposed not to appoint to either post permanently until the outcome of the shared services business case is known; instead, interim acting up arrangements will be put in place at the appropriate time commencing with the Head of Human Resources from June 2022.

Reasons for Recommendations

3.5 The Council has a comparatively small Leadership Team with only 5 Heads of Service supporting the Chief Executive. Covering two of these positions on an interim basis for an extended period is becoming challenging, with one only being filled on a part-time basis and the other creating capacity issues at the next management tier. It is therefore proposed to appoint to these posts on a permanent basis in order to restore capacity.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

4.1 The senior officer posts referred to in the report support the delivery of all the Council's Corporate Priorities.

5 Report Detail

5.1 Following the retirement of two Heads of Service in 2021, both posts have been covered on an interim basis. It was decided at the time not to make permanent appointments due to the impending development of a business case to consider the sharing of more services with Stafford Borough Council. Circumstances have

changed since the original decision, and it is considered that it is not sustainable to continue to fill both positions on an interim basis for a prolonged period.

Head of Finance and Deputy Chief Executive

- 5.2 Mrs Fullagar, Chief Accountant, was appointed by Council to cover the post of Head of Finance and s151 Officer on an interim basis. As reported to Council on 16 February 2022, Mrs Fullagar has decided for personal reasons, she does not wish to continue in the interim role and is content to return to her substantive post of Chief Accountant.
- 5.3 In order to ensure that the Council has sufficient financial expertise and to meet its statutory requirements, it has been necessary to appoint an interim Head of Finance and s151 Officer. The post has been filled by Tim Willis, on a part-time basis, through a recruitment agency. As Mr Willis is only working for the Council on a part-time basis, Mrs Fullagar has agreed to act as his deputy until a permanent appointment is made.
- 5.4 It is now proposed to commence the recruitment process for a permanent s151 Officer and Deputy Chief Executive. A Members Appointments Panel will be set up for the appointment of the Deputy Chief Executive/s151 Officer. As the position of s151 Officer is shared with Stafford Borough Council (SBC), they will also need to be represented on the Appointments Panel. It is anticipated that either the Leader or the Cabinet Member for Resources will be the representative for SBC.
- 5.5 The previous s151 Officer also acted as Deputy Manager Director. This role is currently being covered on an interim basis as part of the arrangements approved by Council for the sharing of a Chief Executive. Mrs Aupers, Head of Governance & Corporate Services was appointed to act as Deputy following an internal recruitment process. Mrs Aupers will continue to act as Deputy Chief Executive during the development of the second stage of the shared services business case and/or until the commencement in post of a new s151 Officer / Deputy Chief Executive.
- 5.6 Traditionally the Council has managed the recruitment of senior officers internally, with occasional support from the West Midlands Employers Organisation to assist with the provision of assessment centres as part of the shortlisting process. However, it is anticipated that it will be potentially difficult to recruit a suitably experienced and high calibre candidate due to a challenging market for s151 Officer posts, particularly one that is required to work across two Councils. Therefore, it is proposed to enlist the services of a recruitment agency to support the search and recruitment of suitably experienced candidates.
- 5.7 As well as supporting the search for suitable candidates, the recruitment agency will support the Member Appointment Panel in testing, long-listing, shortlisting, and undertaking the interviews. It is anticipated that use of a recruitment agency will cost £25,000, though this will include advertising costs that the Council would normally pay.
- 5.8 With fees in the region of £25,000 alternative quotations would normally be obtained as required by the Council's Procurement Regulations. However, a waiver is to be sought to allow the appointment of the agency used to source the current interim Head of Finance. The request for a waiver is based on the need

to expedite the start of the recruitment process and the fact that three agencies/organisations were approached when seeking to appoint the current interim. Only one of the agencies was forthcoming in identifying suitable candidates. The agency is experienced in dealing with public sector appointments and has been used by Stafford Borough Council previously for senior management vacancies.

Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles

- 5.9 Following an internal interview process, Mr Presland, Waste & Engineering Services Manager, was appointed as the interim Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles.
- 5.10 As Mr Presland is acting as an interim Head of Service, his substantive post has been held open for him. It was not practicable to fill the Waste & Engineering Services Manager post internally, so it has been filled on a casual part-time basis. There have been a number of challenges for the temporary post holder over the last year; working part-time has impacted on this and resulted in some duties not being fulfilled. It is considered that this is not sustainable going forward.
- 5.11 The Council's Constitution states that appointments at Chief Officer level are ordinarily subject to an external recruitment process overseen by a Members Appointments Panel. However, as the post has already been through an internal selection process chaired by the then Managing Director and former Head of Environment & Healthy Lifestyles it is considered that Mr. Presland's appointment could be made permanent without the formality of a Members Appointment Panel. This would be preferable as it will save time and money, recognise Mr Presland's performance in the role so far and is a positive step from a succession planning perspective.
- 5.12 Mr Presland has proved himself to be more than competent in carrying out the role and has become a valued member of the Leadership Team by his peers and Members over the last 12 months. It is therefore proposed that Mr Presland should be appointed on a permanent basis to the position of Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles.
- 5.13 Mr Presland's appointment will then allow for his substantive post to be appointed to on a permanent basis and a recruitment process will commence for this.
- 5.14 Preliminary work on the shared services business case indicates that making a permanent appointment to the Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles is not going to compromise any plans for a future senior management structure.

Shared Heads of Service

- 5.15 Two of the SBC Shared Heads of Service have announced their intention to retire during 2022. Mr Raby, Head of Human Resources is going to retire in June 2022. Mr Kendrick, Head of Technology is going to reduce to 3 days a week from June 2022 and will retire in November this year.
- 5.16 It is proposed not to appoint to either post permanently until the outcome of the shared services business case is known; instead acting up arrangements will be put in place for the interim period.

6 Implications**6.1 Financial**

The estimated £25,000 cost for the recruitment agency for the appointment of a s151 Officer/Deputy Chief Executive will be met from savings on existing vacancies within the senior management structure.

There are no additional costs associated with the permanent appointment of the Head of Environment and Healthy Lifestyles.

6.2 Legal

None

6.3 Human Resources

The Human Resources implications of this process are as set out in the body of the report. The HR Services section will provide appropriate support to the appointed Consultant for the s151 Officer / Deputy Chief Executive position and will provide recruitment support and guidance for the appointment of the Waste & Engineering Services Manager also.

6.4 Risk Management

None

6.5 Equality & Diversity

None

6.6 Climate Change

None

7 Appendices to the Report

None.