

Full Council

30th March 2023

Report Title	Urgent Item - Chief Executive Appointment - Permanent and Interim Arrangements
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Executive Member	Cllr Jason Smithers, Leader of the Council

Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	Not Applicable

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider the process for the permanent appointment of a Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service (statutory appointment), in addition to the proposed interim arrangements for this post.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The current Chief Executive / Head of Paid Service has resigned from his position. In order to ensure that the Council continues to have strategic stability and leadership, this report proposes that a process is commenced to appoint an Interim Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service.
- 2.2. The report also proposes that the Council commissions an Executive Search Partner to commence a recruitment process for a permanent appointment to the post of Chief Executive in September 2023.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that Council:

- i) Delegate authority to the Leader of the Council in consultation with the Assistant Director of Human Resources to commission an executive search company for a permanent appointment to the post of Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service.
- ii) Note that the Employment Committee will approve the process for the recruitment of a permanent Chief Executive following appointment of an executive search partner; including the establishment of an Appointments Sub-Committee.
- iii) Note the process and timeline for the appointment of an Interim Chief Executive.
- iv) Note that any necessary amendments to proper officer appointments during the interim period will be considered by Council in May 2023.
- v) Appoint the Executive Director of Customer and Governance as Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer until such time as Council determine the permanent appointment to the Chief Executive role.

3.2 Reason for Recommendations – Section 4 Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires every Council to designate one of its officers as the Head of Paid Service. Upon the post of Chief Executive becoming vacant, the Constitution provides that Council will decide how to proceed.

3.3 Alternative Options Considered – The Constitution provides that the designated Deputy Chief Executive is able to assume the responsibilities and powers of the Chief Executive if the post is vacant. This would however reduce the senior capacity for the organisation and would result in instability in strategic leadership of the authority.

4. Report Background

4.1 The Chief Executive, Rob Bridge, resigned his position as Chief Executive on 27th March 2023 and will leave the employment of the Council on 4th June 2023.

4.2 It is necessary to commence the process for the appointment of a new Chief Executive to minimise the gap between the current Chief Executive leaving office and the new Chief Executive taking up the role. This will ensure continuity in the leadership and strategic direction of North Northamptonshire Council employees and the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and priorities to its residents.

- 4.3 It is also necessary to consider the Council's interim arrangements, pending the permanent appointment to the vacant position, to maintain stability and momentum.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1 Interim Arrangements

- 5.2 Given the process, likely employment notice periods of the successful candidate and the summer period (which is not conducive to good recruitment), there will be a gap between the current postholder's departure and a permanent Chief Executive commencing employment.

- 5.3 To ensure that the organisation has sufficient strategic leadership over the coming months, it is proposed that an interim appointment to the post should be made.

- 5.4 In terms of the interim appointment, the Employment Procedure Rules provide that if the Chief Executive post is vacant, then the Council will decide how to proceed.

- 5.5 For all other Chief Officer appointments, the Chief Executive can make appointments for less than six-months and for longer appointments this will be in consultation with the Leader, Executive Members, and the Leader of the Opposition.

- 5.6 For the interim position, it is proposed that an internal application and interview process will be undertaken. This would consist of inviting Expressions of Interest and a shortlisting and interview process, undertaken by the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Council, the Chair of the Employment Committee, and the Leader of the Opposition. The Interim Chief Executive and Statutory Officer would be appointed on the salary that is commensurate with the Council's agreed Pay Policy.

- 5.7 A subsequent process will be required to backfill the internal candidate's post, and this will be undertaken in line with current delegations.

- 5.8 The Constitution provides that the designation of Head of Paid Service is a matter reserved to Council and therefore formal approval of the interim appointment will be considered by Council at the Annual General Meeting. This will ensure that there is a suitable interim postholder in place prior to the current Chief Executive's departure on 4th June 2023.

5.9 Permanent Appointment

- 5.10 In terms of the permanent appointment to the Chief Executive position, the Employment Committee (or a Sub-Committee established by it) is responsible for recommending a preferred candidate to Council following a robust

recruitment and selection process. In line with other Chief Officer appointments, it is proposed that the Employment Committee establish an Appointments Sub-Committee.

- 5.11 Given the importance of the position to the Council, it is proposed that the Council commission an external Executive Search Partner to assist with the recruitment process. The Council's commitment to fairness and equality will be followed to ensure that every effort is made in the recruitment process to allow for a broad range of appropriately qualified candidates to be considered in the search and selection process.
- 5.12 To ensure that the Council advertises the role at an optimum time to attract quality applications from a wide field of candidates, it is proposed that adverts are published after the summer period, this will be in September 2023.
- 5.13 Whilst the process will be approved by the Employment Committee, it is envisaged that the appointed agency would undertake the longlisting process following consideration of applications received, appropriate testing and initial interviews. It is likely that the agency would then submit a long list of candidates to an established Sub-Committee which would prepare a shortlist of their preferred candidates, with assistance from external advisors if desired and the Assistant Director of Human Resources. The Sub-Committee would interview the shortlisted candidates and recommend the preferred candidate to Council.
- 5.14 Stakeholders will also be involved in the process to allow candidates to meet some of our key partners as well as enabling partners to give feedback on candidates.
- 5.15 The appointment of a Chief Executive and Statutory Officer requires a formal Council decision, and this will be scheduled into the existing Programme of Meetings in due course. Dependent on the notice period of any successful candidate, it is likely that a permanent incumbent would be in post between January- March 2024.
- 5.16 To ensure that there is stability for electoral functions, it is proposed that the Executive Director of Customer and Governance is appointed as Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer until such time as Council determine the permanent appointment to the Chief Executive role.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. Commissioning of an Executive Search Partner.
- 6.2. An internal process for the Interim Chief Executive would be commenced in April 2023

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources and Financial

7.1.1 The costs of the interim Chief Executive will be met from the existing budget for the post. The cost of recruiting will be funded from within overall Council resources.

7.1.2 The cost of backfilling the Interim Chief Executive's position will be met from the savings against the permanent post. Any costs in excess of the available salary budget will be met from within overall Council resources.

7.2. Legal and Governance

7.2.1 Section 4 Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires every Council to designate one of its officers as the Head of Paid Service.

7.2.2 Proper Officer appointments must be made by Council including the Constitution reserves the appointment of the Head of Paid Service to Council.

7.3 Relevant Policies and Plans

7.3.1 The post of Chief Executive is key to the Council delivering its corporate objectives.

7.4 Risk

7.4.1 There is a risk that an Interim Chief Executive will not be appointed which will leave the Council without a Head of Paid Service. An early internal process will ensure that this risk is mitigated.

7.5 Consultation

7.5.1 Not applicable

7.6 Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

7.6.1 Not applicable

7.7 Consideration by Scrutiny

7.7.1 Not applicable

7.8 Equality Implications

7.8.1 The Council promotes equality in its recruitment processes and appointments and promotes fairness to all. All recruitment processes will ensure that they comply with equalities requirements.

7.9 **Climate and Environment Impact**

7.9.1 Not applicable.

7.10 **Community Impact**

7.10.1 Not applicable

7.11 **Crime and Disorder Impact**

7.11.1 Not applicable

8 Background Papers

8.1 None