

Joint Staff Committee



Report of Acting Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations

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NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing this information.

Staff Structure Matters - Appointment of an Interim Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer

Recommendation

That the committee approves the process, timeline and job description for the appointment of an interim head of finance and section 151 officer.

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides the proposed process and timeline for the recruitment of an interim head of finance and section 151 officer for the two councils.

Background

2. Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires each council to designate a suitably qualified officer to have responsibility for the proper administration of its financial affairs.
3. William Jacobs, the incumbent Head of Finance and section 151 officer, will retire from the councils on 30 May 2020. To ensure resilience and effective handover, the chief executive has agreed that William Jacobs will step down from the Head of Finance and section 151 officer positions when an interim replacement has been appointed.

4. Once a new interim head of service and section 151 officer has been appointed, William Jacobs will continue to be employed by the council from then until 30 May 2020 in the capacity of Interim Head of Finance Projects. This position will focus on the 5 Councils Partnership and benchmarking best practice across local government, along with any other priorities as set and agreed by the chief executive. William Jacobs will also provide advisory support to the new incumbent as they oversee the budget setting and year-end processes.
5. In accordance with the councils' constitution, the joint staff committee has responsibility for appointing heads of service and both full Councils approve the appointment of statutory officers, following the recommendation of such an appointment by the joint staff committee.
6. The chief executive has indicated to the acting deputy chief executive – transformation and operations that he wishes the interim head of finance and section 151 officer post be advertised without delay internally initially and then externally if required, in accordance with the process followed for the recent management restructure. This process would allow an appointment to be made before William Jacobs leaves the councils, ensuring an effective and resilient handover period as well as robustness for both councils through the budget setting period.

Outline timetable

7. The main steps in the appointment process will be as follows:

Activity / Stage	Date	Responsibility
Agree process, timeline and job description for recruitment of the interim head of finance and section 121 officer.	21 October 2019	Acting Deputy CEO – Transformation and Operations, CEO and Joint Staff Committee
Advertise the role and invite applications	22 October 2019	Acting Deputy CEO – Transformation and Operations
Prepare interview pack	23 October – 1 November 2019	Acting Deputy CEO – Transformation and Operations and CEO in consultation with the Leaders
Shortlist for interview	5 November 2019	Acting Deputy CEO – Transformation and Operations and CEO
Invite candidates to interview	6 November 2019	Acting Deputy CEO – Transformation and Operations
Complete interviews and make recommendation of appointment	Week commencing 18 November 2019	Joint Staff Committee (supported by Acting Deputy CEO – Transformation and Operations and CEO)

Activity / Stage	Date	Responsibility
Consult all cabinet members of both councils on proposed appointment	Week commencing 25 November 2019	Acting Deputy CEO – Transformation and Operations
Vale Council to consider report of acting deputy CEO – transformation and operations and head of legal and democratic services and recommendations of the joint staff committee	11 December 2019	Vale Council
South Council to consider report of acting deputy CEO – transformation and operations and head of legal and democratic services and recommendations of the joint staff committee	12 December 2019	South Council

8. The proposed interim head of finance and section 151 job description is attached as *Appendix 1*.

Financial implications

9. There are no financial implications in approving the recruitment and selection process as set out in this report. There will be a short-term financial impact to the finance service budget following the appointment, whilst William Jacobs and his successor overlap for a period of what is anticipated to be 5 months. This can be met within the overall existing councils' budget.

Legal implications

10. The designation of a section 151 officer is a statutory duty for each council. Some minor consequential changes may be required to the councils' constitutions to reflect the new appointment of a statutory officer.

Risks

11. The objective of section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 is to reduce financial risk by requiring a designated officer to be responsible for the proper administration of the council's financial affairs. This should reduce the risk of financial malpractice, poor financial planning, fraud, waste and loss.
12. The objective of requiring a professionally qualified and experienced individual to fulfil the role is to promote sound financial management and reduce the risk of financial failure.

Other Implications

13. None

Conclusion

14. The committee is invited to agree the appointment process, timeline and job description set out in this report.