

Joint Staff Committee



Report of Head of Corporate Services

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Appointment of head of legal and democratic and monitoring officer

Recommendation

That the committee

- a) conducts an interview, and if appropriate, asks the Chief Executive to complete the process necessary to appoint their preferred candidate as head of legal and democratic services subject to, confirmation from each Cabinet that there are no objections.
- b) if an appointment is made, recommends to each Council to appoint the head of legal and democratic as the councils' monitoring officer.

Purpose of Report

1. This report invites the Joint Staff Committee to conduct a formal interview, and if appropriate, appoint to the head of legal and democratic position. If an appointment is made, to recommend to each Council that the successful candidate also be appointed as the councils' monitoring officer.

Appointment process

2. On 22 April 2024, the head of legal and democratic and monitoring officer position was advertised internally and externally, with a closing date of 5pm Monday 27 May 2024.
3. The external recruitment was managed as a head-hunting exercise through GatenbySanderson, following a selection process requesting quotations from three

such agencies. The vacancy was advertised in The MJ, Law Society Gazette, the Guardian, LinkedIn, Diversity Network (an online jobs board particularly targeting websites to attract candidates with disabilities, from a variety of ethnic groups and the LGBTQI+ communities) and GatenbySanderson's own website. In accordance with the agreed proposal, GatenbySanderson also targeted 111 known candidates in the profession to either discuss the role or seek recommendations for the role.

4. On 3 June, GatenbySanderson provided a long list of 15 candidates, rated 'A' 'B' and 'C' according to the perceived fit with the candidate specification. One internal candidate applied. Following a longlisting meeting with Mark Stone (Chief Executive), Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive – Place) and Abi Witting (People & Culture Manager) 7 candidates were selected to progress to the technical interview stage including the internal candidate. One external candidate withdrew from the process.
5. The technical interview stage was a formal interview with a panel comprising of Kembi Coakelin (GatenbySanderson consultant), Daniel Bainbridge (Group Head of Law and Governance at Arun District Council) and Abi Witting (People and Culture Manager). The questions explored the following topics: motivation, finances and budgets, strategic leadership, navigating problems and disagreements, qualities of a monitoring officer and team management and innovation.
6. On 19 June, GatenbySanderson provided a short-list of six candidates, rated 'A' and 'C' according to the perceived fit with the candidate specification. Following a shortlisting meeting with Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive – Place), Mark Minion (Head of Corporate Services and deputising for Adrianna Partridge), Simon Hewings (Head of Finance and S151 Officer) and Abi Witting (People and Culture Manager) four candidates were selected to progress to the technical interview stage this did not include the internal candidate.
7. A briefing session was held for members of the Joint Staffing Committee on 20 June 2024 to provide an overview of the service and to brief them on the next steps. A copy of the slides are attached as appendix 2. Interview questions that committee members can use will be made available prior to the interview, although committee members may decide to ask follow-up questions.
8. The next phase (scheduled for 15 July) of the selection process will be a two-stage process.
 - Stage one is an officer-led informal interview with Suzanne Malcolm (Deputy Chief Executive – Place), Adrian Duffield (Head of Planning), Tim Oruye (Head of Policy and Programmes) and Paul Fielding (Head of Housing and Environment).
 - The second stage is a formal officer lead interview including a presentation. The panel will be Mark Stone (Chief Executive) Adrianna Partridge (Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate and Communities), Mark Minion (Head of Corporate Services), Simon Hewings (Head of Finance and S151 Officer) and Abi Witting (People and Culture Manager).
9. Following these interviews, up to four candidates will be invited for a second, formal interview with members.

10. The Joint Staff Committee is asked to conduct these interviews with the invited candidates, and if appropriate, to appoint to the position.
11. As required by the councils' officer employment procedure rules and the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001, all members of the cabinets will be informed of the decision to appoint and given an opportunity to raise any objections. If there are no material or well-founded objections by cabinet members to the proposed appointment, the appointment will be made and the recommendation to appoint the successful candidate as the councils' monitoring officer will be submitted to Vale Council meeting on 17 July 2024 and a special South Council meeting provisionally scheduled for 18 July 2024.
12. The agreed head of legal and democratic and monitoring officer job description is attached as appendix 1.

Financial implications

13. The successful candidate will be appointed on the same budgeted salary as all heads of service who have additional statutory roles, which is £122,475 per annum. Half of the employee costs will be met by South Oxfordshire District Council and half the costs will be met by Vale of White Horse District Council in accordance with the existing Section 113 agreement between the two councils.

Legal implications

14. Designating the head of legal and democratic as the councils' monitoring officer will fulfil the councils' duty under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
15. Informing all members of the cabinets of the recommendations and giving them an opportunity to raise any objections will meet the requirements of the councils' officer employment procedure rules and the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001.

Conclusion

16. The committee is invited to conduct formal interviews, and, if appropriate, select a preferred candidate for appointment as head of legal and democratic and to recommend each Council on the appointment of that individual as monitoring officer.