

This Report will be made public on 25 January 2023

Report Number **P/22/05**

**To:** Personnel Committee  
**Date:** 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023  
**Status:** Non-executive Decision  
**Chief Executive:** Susan Priest

**SUBJECT: SENIOR MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

**SUMMARY:** This report provides an update on the senior management at the council. It seeks the committee's approval to move ahead with the recruitment for the proposed interim and subsequently the permanent Corporate Services Director role.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Charlotte Spendley, Corporate Services Director (s151 Officer), has given her resignation and ceases employment at the Council in March 2023. The council has a challenging agenda which requires appropriate skill sets to be deployed in the most appropriate way to ensure delivery of our projects linked to the Corporate Plan and the effective discharge of relevant statutory responsibilities.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To receive and note report P/22/05;
2. To agree that the Chief Executive, with support from the Chief HR Officer, proceed to source an interim Director for Corporate Services who will act as the s151 Officer, reporting the outcome to Council in due course; and
3. To approve option 2 as the preferred method of recruitment and selection to the permanent Director for Corporate Services (s151 Officer) vacancy.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council is currently delivering a challenging corporate agenda with a number of substantial projects featured as high priority. In addition, there are a number of additional financial challenges that have emerged over recent months which also require the oversight and input of senior-level expertise to ensure they are delivered effectively in line with Members' wishes and according to our statutory obligations.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The current senior management of the council consisting of the Chief Executive, plus 3 Directors, has been in place since January 2020. Two of the Directors were internal appointments offered on a promotion basis, and the third post secured externally with the support of a recruitment consultant.
- 2.2 This three-directorate structure (Corporate Services; Place; and Operations & Housing) has served the council well allowing progress to be made on significant projects such as Otterpool Park, Folkestone Place Plan and the Levelling Up bid in addition to securing Customer Service Excellence and continuing with our move to digital services and associated service improvement plans.

## 3. OPTIONS FOR RECRUITMENT & SELECTION

- 3.1 There are several ways in which we could approach the recruitment and ultimately the selection to the Director vacancy:

**Option 1** – do nothing and reduce the CLT structure to the existing 2 Directors. While this would be a welcome reduction in the overall senior level management costs to the council, this would be a high-risk strategy as neither of the remaining two Directors have public sector finance expertise and this could bring about a failure to ensure adequate financial stability and governance for the council. In addition, there are no identified potential applicants internally that could be considered for promotion due to the current difficulties experienced in resourcing within the Finance team, gaps in expertise and the necessary reliance on interims.

**Option 2** – external process using a recruitment consultancy who can run an executive search to source candidates from across the region and nationally. A full screening process would be undertaken by the consultant, liaising with the Chief Executive and Chief HR Officer, who would provide a grading order of applications for each role before recommending which candidates should have a final interview with the personnel committee supported by the consultant and Chief Executive. This option provides a robust approach to sourcing candidates for any senior position at the council and allows opportunity to secure a Director that is interested in and can add value to the council's agenda.

**Option 3** – run an external process ourselves. Whilst this would be a cost-effective method it comes with the risk of not finding a suitable candidate if our reach is not targeted or wide-ranging enough. Progressing this internally means we are reliant on placing an advert in the external market press and on social media and interested

candidates seeing the advert at that particular point in time. It does not give us the targeted reach to impress on potential candidates the challenges, rewards and opportunities of working for F&H DC and the significance of projects the individual needs to lead.

- 3.2 Preliminary enquiries with a recruitment consultancy that have been used previously have indicated that the full process associated with option 2 would cost approximately £12,500 per role and an appropriate budget can be identified for this expense.
- 3.3 Subject to Personnel Committee approving the proposals contained within this report, the intention will be to move forward swiftly with a timetable agreed with the recruitment consultants which will enable the final selection process to be undertaken either ahead of or immediately after the District elections in May 2023. Once a suitable appointment has been identified by Personnel Committee they will be able to recommend the appointment to a meeting of the Council. The salary package will be in excess of £100,000 per annum and the requirement of Council to formally appoint the statutory s151 officer necessitates a Full Council decision on the recommendation of Personnel Committee.
- 3.4 The permanent recruitment is likely to take a number of months, potentially until October 2023 when considering that interviews will be scheduled for either April or June 2023 (depending on the quality of initial responses from potential candidates) and the potential notice period of 3 months of the successful applicant.

It is also important to ensure that the council is not de-stabilised as we progress with our demanding agenda and high workloads. Subject to Personnel Committee's agreement, the intention would be for the Chief Executive and Chief HR Officer to identify a suitable interim Director placement for 6-9 months in order to carry forward the statutory work involved in year-end and the preparation for a new administration. Once an interim has been identified a report will be submitted to Council to enable the allocation of the s151 officer statutory responsibility following the incumbent's departure.

- 3.5 As a matter of courtesy, the main political group leaders will be advised of these confidential proposals ahead of the Personnel Committee meeting.
- 3.6 In addition, early conversations have started with the Chief Officers who report directly to the Directors with a view to reallocating some line management responsibilities so additional capacity is available at senior level to deal with election preparation, time critical budget-related and strategic resourcing matters.

#### **4. LEGAL / FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS / POLICY MATTERS**

##### **4.1 Legal Officers Comments (AK)**

There are no comments legal comments arising directly from this report. However, it will be necessary to follow relevant HR processes/procedures and the constitution when necessary and relevant.

##### **4.2 Finance Officers Comments (SP)**

The financial implications are considered within the body of this report.

#### 4.3 **Diversities and Equalities Implications (ASm)**

There are no specific Diversities and Equalities Implications arising from this report.

### 5. **CONTACT OFFICER AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

#### 5.1 Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting:

Susan Priest – Chief Executive

Email: [susan.priest@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:susan.priest@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

Andrina Smith – Chief HR Officer

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Email: [andrina.smith@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:andrina.smith@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

#### 5.2 The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

None