

# Chief Officer Appointments Panel



Date of meeting:	24 May 2024
Title of Report:	<b>Recruitment to Service Director Finance</b>
Lead Members:	Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance)
Lead Strategic Director:	Tracey Lee (Chief Executive)
Author:	Chris Squire (Service Director HR & Organisational Development)
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Your Reference:	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

## **Purpose of Report**

This report presents a proposal to Members for the recruitment of a Service Director for Finance (s151).

## **Recommendations and Reasons**

It is recommended that the Appointments Panel:

1. Note the content of this report.
2. Agree to undertake a recruitment process for the post of Service Director for Finance.

## **Alternative options considered and rejected.**

This recommendation put forward is in line with the Council's established practices and is offered as the best option in these circumstances. There has been a campaign to recruit to a Head of Finance post, with potential progression to the Service Director position, in anticipation of the retirement of the current Service Director in March 2025, however this has not been successful.

## **Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan**

The Corporate Plan outlines the strategic direction of the Council. Recommendations within this report align to the current Plymouth City Council Corporate Plan, specifically the provision of quality public services, trusting & engaging our communities, spending money wisely, empowering and engaging our staff and being a strong voice for Plymouth.

## **Implications for the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:**

The Service Director for Finance is a permanent role with established budget contained within the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Subject to approval by Full Council, the role will also cover the statutory section 151 function.

## **Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:**

It is the responsibility of all senior officers to ensure we develop and deliver our plans to enable the Council to be carbon neutral by 2030 and leading the City in carbon reduction.

## **Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:**

The post would be the Council's section 151 officer, subject to approval by Full Council. Any recruitment and selection processes will be undertaken with reference to Plymouth City Council's established procedures and relevant legislation.

## Appendices

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Role Profile Service Director for Finance							

### Background papers:

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Tracey Lee, Chief Executive											
Date agreed: 15 May 2024											
Cabinet Member approval: Cllr Mark Lowry											
Date approved: 14/05/2024											

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) Regulations 1993 prescribe a number of actions when recruitment to a Chief Officer post is required. The definition of 'Chief Officer' for the purposes of these regulations refers to:

- the Head of Paid Service,
- the Monitoring Officer,
- the Section 151 Officer,
- a statutory Chief Officer (as defined by section 2(6) of the 1989 Act
- Non-statutory Chief Officers as defined by section 2(7) of the 1989 Act (which essentially include officers who report directly to the head of paid service): regulation 1(2) of the 1993 Regulations.
- A Deputy Chief Officer (those reporting to a Chief Officer)

There are a number of defined activities that must be undertaken, including:

- The creation of a document clearly stating the duties of the officer, what qualifications, experience and skills they will need to undertake the role (the role profile).
- Making arrangements for the post to be advertised in such a way as is likely to bring it to the attention of persons who are qualified to apply for it.
- Providing a copy of the role profile to any person requesting this.

Once advertised as above, authorities will either interview all those who are qualified to undertake the role or select a short list of qualified applicants. If there are no qualified applicants, the local authority will then make further arrangements.

## **2. CHIEF OFFICER APPOINTMENTS PANEL DELEGATED FUNCTIONS**

Council has delegated the function of interviewing candidates to the Chief Officer Appointments panel, (COAP). COAP acts with the delegated authority of the Council to appoint to Chief Officer roles where the law prohibits the Head of Paid Service from making the appointment but allows full Council to delegate the responsibility.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

### **3.1. Service Director for Finance**

The Service Director for Finance is a key role within the Corporate Management Team of the Council and includes the statutory section 151 function, subject to approval by a meeting of the Full Council.

The Service Director for Finance will report to the Chief Operating Officer (currently advertised), with a strategic financial reporting line to the Chief Executive. The council has been recruiting to a Head of Finance post, to increase senior capacity and capability within the Finance Service, with the aim of providing succession for the existing Service Director of Finance when he retires. However, this has not been successful and given how critical the service director function is, the preferred option is to advertise the post and search for suitable candidates now. There has been some interest in the director role, whilst attempting to recruit to the Head of Finance post.

### **3.2. Portfolio**

The Service Director for Finance will have 3 direct reports (Head of Revenue, Benefits and Transactional Services, Head of Finance (Deputy s151 Officer) and Insurance Manager) and will be responsible for Finance, Revenue and Benefits. The role will also act as the commissioner for internal audit services, which are provided through Devon Audit Partnership.

The role profile for the post can be seen in Appendix One.

#### **4. RECRUITMENT TO POSTS**

This paper proposes that Plymouth City Council commences the process to seek a permanent appointment to the Service Director for Finance post. If agreed by COAP, an executive search agency will be appointed as quickly as possible.

The permanent selection processes are likely to last a minimum of three months and will need to be closely managed to ensure a good candidate experience. Based on the likelihood that successful candidates will be required to give three months' notice (subject to negotiation with their employer), they may not be available to start employment with Plymouth City Council until December 2024. There is the potential for some overlap with the current director.

Internal candidates would be able to apply for the permanent roles if suitably qualified and experienced. It is suggested that the interview process is supported by appropriate assessments and panels, including employees, service users, partner organisations as part of an assessment centre, prior to interviews by the Chief Officer Appointments Panel.

#### **5. FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

Recruitment to this senior role will require assistance from an external executive search company, with potential costs in the region of £22,000 to £25,000 per role. These costs cover items including search and attraction of candidates, advertising, initial candidate sifting, services of a technical adviser and psychometric testing.

The role is a Band 4 Chief Officer within the chief officer pay and grading structure and the salary is currently within the range of £82,949 - £115,330. Chief Officer pay is linked to national pay bargaining and no increase has yet been announced for the financial year 2024/25.

Benchmarking has commenced to ensure advice is available about current market rates for this role ahead of any appointment to the permanent role.