

Chief Officer Appointments Panel



Date of meeting:	20 September 2024
Title of Report:	Recruitment to Interim Chief Operating Officer
Lead Members:	Councillors Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance), Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure, HR & OD) and Sally Haydon (Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Libraries, Events, Cemeteries and Crematoria)
Lead Strategic Director:	Tracey Lee (Chief Executive)
Author:	Chris Squire (Service Director HR & Organisational Development)
Contact Email:	Tracey.Lee@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Click here to enter text.
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report highlights the request for Members to undertake a formal interview for the post of Interim Chief Operating Officer.

Recommendations and Reasons

It is recommended that the Appointments Panel:

1. Note the content of this report.
2. Undertakes a formal interview for the post of Interim Chief Operating Officer.

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 the circumstances, following an unsuccessful process to recruit a permanent Chief Operating Officer earlier this year. Leaving the role vacant has also been considered, pending permanent recruitment however this is a key post on the Council's Management Team with responsibility for a number of critical activities relating to the effectiveness of the organisation and leadership and experience in this role is required during this period. In addition, the Assistant Chief Executive is retiring from the organisation, and will not be replaced, leaving a large number of teams reporting to the Chief Executive and other directors. It is therefore recommended that an interim appointment be made.

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.

Implications for the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications

The Chief Operating Officer is a permanent role with established budget contained within the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Further information relating to financial implications are contained within the body of the report.

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:

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

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											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? David Haley (Director of Children’s Services) approved on behalf Tracey Lee (Chief Executive)											
Date approved 11 September 2024											
Cabinet Member approval: Cllr Lowry approved by email. Date approved 11 September 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) and
- 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 suitable and qualified applicants. If there are no suitable 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

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) will be a key role within the Corporate Management Team of the Council, leading a range of support functions that are critical to the health and effectiveness of the organisation.

At the Chief Officer Appointments Panel held 22 March 2024, it was agreed to retitle the role from Strategic Director for Resources (Section 151) to Chief Operating Officer. As a result, the role no longer has the designation of the section 151 officer role and no longer requires the postholder to be a qualified accountant. Instead, the Service Director for Finance will retain the s151 designation and report to the COO, with a strategic financial reporting line to the Chief Executive.

The Chief Operating Officer was subsequently advertised as a permanent role in May/June this year, and the Chief Officer Appointments Panel interviewed two candidates at the beginning of August. No appointment was made to the role at that time.

Reporting to the Chief Executive, the role is responsible for providing strategic and organisational leadership and direction to a range of functions across corporate & customer services, in order to help deliver the vision and priorities of the Council.

4. INTERIM RECRUITMENT UPDATE

The Chief Officer Appointments Panel did make an offer of a permanent appointment on 2 August 2024 to the post, however the (internal) candidate was subsequently successful at the interview for Strategic Director of Adults, Health & Communities. Alternative options have been considered, one of which was to leave the role vacant pending permanent recruitment. However, given the importance of this role and its responsibility for the strategic leadership for functions including Finance, Human Resources, Health & Safety, Facilities Management, Customer Services, ICT, Libraries, Business Support, and Transformation, it is recommended that an interim appointment be made to ensure a co-ordinated approach to corporate services during what is an exceptionally challenging time for the council.

It is therefore proposed that an interim be engaged initially for 6 months, but with the option to extend to 9 months pending the permanent appointment to the role.

A number of CVs have been submitted from three recruitment providers. Those candidates who are identified as having the requisite skills, knowledge and experience for the role will be invited to the Chief Officer Appointments Panel on 20 September 2024.

A supplementary pack, containing CVs and supporting statements will be forwarded to the Panel prior to that Chief Officers Appointment Panel

5. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Interim Appointment

This type of post is very much in-demand and there is a shortage of high-quality candidates. Market rates for these roles fall within a range of £1,000 - £1,300 per day (inclusive of charges).

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Appointments Panel:

1. Note the contents of this report.
2. Undertake a formal interview for the role of Interim Chief Operating Officer.