

# Chief Officer Appointments Panel



Date of meeting:	14 February 2025
Title of Report:	<b>Recruitment to the role of Chief Operating Officer</b>
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:	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

## Purpose of Report

This report updates Members on proposals for the permanent recruitment for the post of Chief Operating Officer.

## Recommendations and Reasons

It is recommended that the Appointments Panel:

- Note the content of this report.
- Agree to undertake a permanent recruitment process for the post of Chief Operating Officer.
- Approve the procurement of an executive search agency, for the recruitment of a permanent 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 these circumstances. 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.

## 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:**

The post would be the Council’s Senior Information Risk Owner, as well as the strategic lead for Health & Safety. 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							

**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: 06/02/2025											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report: Chief Executive has approved by email.											
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure, HR & OD)											
Date approved: 05/02/2025											

## 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 qualified applicants. If there are no qualified applicants, the local authority will then consider alternative 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 is 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 on 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.

Following approval by the Chief Officer Appointments Panel in March 2024, an executive search partner was engaged, with several candidates subsequently being presented for consideration. Two candidates were invited for interview by the Chief Officer Appointments Panel scheduled for 2 August 2024. The Chief Officer Appointments Panel did make an offer of a permanent appointment on 2 August 2024 to the post, however that candidate was subsequently successful in obtaining an offer of another internal role.

Several alternative options were considered, including leaving the role vacant pending permanent recruitment, however given the strategic importance of this role, the Panel agreed to start the process

to recruit an interim candidate. Interviews were held on 20 September 2024 by the Chief Officer Appointments Panel, and an interim Chief Operating Officer was subsequently appointed initially for 6 months, but with the option to extend to 9 months pending the permanent appointment to the role.

A further recruitment process for the permanent role was undertaken in November 2024, although no candidates were assessed as having the requisite skills and experience to progress to the Chief Officer Appointments Panel.

#### **4. RECRUITMENT TO THE PERMANENT POST**

This paper proposes that Plymouth City Council commences the process to seek a permanent appointment to the Chief Operating Officer post. If agreed by the Chief Officer Appointments Panel, an executive search agency will be appointed as quickly as possible.

The search for candidates will focus on organisations and sectors outside of local government, therefore a different emphasis to previous campaigns.

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 September 2025.

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**

The permanent role is currently a Band 2 Chief Officer within the chief officer pay and grading structure and the salary is currently within the range of £140,343 - £168,002 following the 2024/25 pay award. Chief Officer pay is linked to national pay bargaining.

#### **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Appointments Panel:

1. Note the content of this report.
2. Agree to undertake a permanent recruitment process for the post of Chief Operating Officer.
3. Approve the procurement of an executive search agency, for the recruitment of a permanent Chief Operating Officer.

**CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER**

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT TEAM



<b>Grade and Tier</b>	Chief Officer – Band 2	<b>Reference:</b>	TBC
<b>Reports to:</b>	Chief Executive	<b>Job Type:</b>	Strategic Leader

**Role Purpose**

- To ensure operational efficiency and effectiveness through systems, people and processes aligning to the Council's operating model.
- To provide strategic and organisational leadership to deliver the vision and priorities of the Council with particular reference to the Council's operations including HR, Finance, Information Technology, Digital, Customer Services, Procurement, Property and Internal Audit.
- To work with elected members and officers to deliver a transformative customer experience across all of the Council's services.
- To provide strategic leadership and work internally and externally across functional and organisational boundaries to integrate and reform services.
- Joint leadership of the Council's climate change work alongside the Strategic Director of Place, with a focus on delivery of the Council's targets for carbon reduction.
- To provide leadership for Finance, Human Resources, Health & Safety, Facilities Management, Customer Services, ICT, Libraries, Business Support, and Transformation, and ensure a co-ordinated approach to corporate services.
- To communicate the vision of the Council and motivate and influence others to acquire this.

**Federated lead for: Corporate Services and the Executive Office**

- Create and lead a Federation consisting of the Corporate Services directorate and the Executive Office to encourage the best use of resources, avoid duplication and silo working, facilitating knowledge transfer across the senior team. Create centres of excellence and co-design solutions which focus on national, regional and local objectives in a joined-up way across services.

**Statutory and Key Responsibilities/Accountabilities**

- Senior Information Risk Officer – SIRO
- Strategic Lead for Health and Safety across the Council

- **Key Responsibilities**

**Corporate and organisational**

- Work with the Chief Executive and Members to deliver the Council's overall objectives at a city, sub region, regional and national level.
- Provide strong, visible leadership and direction through compelling communication of the Council's vision and values to own Directorate, Federation, Plymouth City Council and externally.
- Provide expertise and advice to Directors, Chief Executive and Members as required.

- Provide leadership to departments within the Directorate and across the Council, ensuring everyone in the workforce understands and acts on the aims of the organisation.
- Ensure that Members and SLT understand and act on advice provided by the Directorate.
- Embed climate change actions across the functions of the Corporate Services directorate, contributing to core reductions in support of the Council's pledge to become carbon neutral by 2030. Jointly lead on climate change actions across the Council.
- To identify and exploit opportunities to increase resources through commercial approaches, income generation and external funding.

### **Performance and Finance**

- Take lead responsibility for the overall corporate and organisational management of the Directorate and Federation ensuring the Council's financial, human resources and other assets are planned, deployed and managed effectively.
- To ensure the Directorate provides cost effective and efficient services for the people of Plymouth.
- Develop and maintain a culture of continuous improvement across corporate services teams and the council.
- To shape, develop and champion the transformation programmes of the Council reflecting political leadership and direction. Embed a positive, innovative culture, which responds effectively and efficiently to the financial, service delivery, economic and social challenges facing the council and its communities, responding continually to the changing external environment.

### **Customers and Communities**

- Contribute to the development of programmes of local engagement and communication within the city with stakeholders and local communities designed to promote the work of the Council, Directorate and Federation and deepen the Council's understanding of those it exists to serve.
- Champion digital transformation of the Council ensuring that customer requirements are at the forefront of developments.
- Create an environment and culture that empowers and requires employees to work collaboratively and effectively across the Directorate/Federation, organisation and with partners.
- Leads and challenges Service Directors and other reports to create continuous improvement and service delivery that is innovative, customer focussed and effective in delivering the Council's agreed outcomes.

### **Partnerships and external relationships**

- Develop long term, mutually beneficial relationships with partners and, where appropriate, integration of service delivery, to successfully deliver expected outcomes and benefits for the City.
- Work as the strategic lead for the Council's shared services ICT and Payroll provider.
- Work with colleagues to provide strategic co-ordination to the Council's 'family of companies'.
- To fulfil a proactive role at regional and national level in promoting and advocating for the city and its communities to deliver improvements and opportunities for residents and businesses.

### **Governance**

- To ensure the statutory duties of the Directorate/Federation are met in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure effective measures are in place to manage and mitigate risk to protect the liability of the Directorate/Federation (including civil contingencies) and the financial probity of the Council and the city.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Role Accountabilities</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Role Outcomes</b></li> </ul>

<p><b>Corporate and organisational</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accountable for the development and delivery of strategy and performance across Directorate/Federation so that it supports Council aims and objectives.</li> <li>▪ Strategic lead for:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Finance, Revenues and Benefits</li> <li>○ Business support</li> <li>○ Libraries</li> <li>○ Transformation and ICT</li> <li>○ Human Resources and Organisational Development.</li> <li>○ Information Governance and Statutory Complaints</li> <li>○ Customer Service</li> <li>○ Facilities Management and Corporate Assets</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Development and delivery of Medium-Term Financial Plan and performance across the Council.</li> <li>▪ Responsible for implementing Council's Organisational Design principles within own Directorate/Federation.</li> <li>▪ High performance of the Directorate/Federation workforce with specific responsibility for the performance of members of Directorate/Federation management teams.</li> </ul> <p><b>Performance and Finance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accountable for the preparation and delivery of the Directorate/Federation revenue and capital budget as aligned to the corporate plan and city priorities.</li> <li>▪ Ensure there is an appropriate performance framework in place to manage service performance and delivery objectives within Directorate/Federation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Directorate/Federation make a demonstrable contribution to Plymouth being recognised as a great place to live and work because of the services it delivers.</li> <li>▪ Plymouth has high fiscal performance with financial resources deployed to best and most efficient advantage.</li> <li>▪ The Directorate/Federation workforce understands the Council's values, priorities and desired outcomes. There is demonstrable evidence of engagement and progress.</li> <li>▪ The performance management framework is clearly communicated, implemented and monitored to ensure good performance is recognised. Performance is managed by outcomes and poor performance is addressed quickly.</li> <li>▪ Appropriate schemes of delegation are in place to move decision making to the lowest appropriate levels for customer and people management issues.</li> <li>▪ The Directorate/Federation has a long-term financial strategy and plan (MTFS) which is clear and actively communicated to Members and CMT. The revenue and capital budget is delivered within agreed tolerances.</li> <li>▪ Financial risks are identified and decisions taken to manage and mitigate them. Measures are in place in respect of anti-fraud and audit matters.</li> <li>▪ The Directorate/Federation is able to demonstrate how each department is performing against a range of performance indicators. Action is taken if performance fails to meet required standards.</li> <li>▪ Customer experience and satisfaction is improved across all Directorates/Federations and there are measures in place to demonstrate that. Clear plans are in place where satisfaction is low.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Customer and communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensures services are focused on continuous improvement within agreed levels of customer satisfaction to best meet the needs of our customers and citizens.</li> </ul> <p><b>Partnerships and external relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creates and manages effective relationships and partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders, building support amongst them in order to deliver better public services.</li> <li>▪ Promote the city by supporting and participating in key corporate events.</li> </ul> <p><b>Governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Delivers the statutory functions within own Directorate/Federation.</li> <li>▪ A Member of the Strategic Command for civil emergencies and business continuity in liaison with the police/other agencies as appropriate. Member of the out of hours rota.</li> <li>▪ Support and advise the Audit Committee.</li> <li>▪ Ensure the Directorate/Federation is compliant with all statutory, regulatory, safeguarding and audit requirements, including, where applicable, those of Ofsted, CQC, Health and Safety Executive and Information Security.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decisions are made as close to the customer as possible, reflecting our operating model.</li> <li>▪ Strong networks have been established in the region and the city has received demonstrable investment from a range of funding agencies/from grants/from partners.</li> <li>▪ A number of key partnerships have been developed which have delivered better outcomes for Plymouth's citizens.</li> <li>▪ Business models are developed that maximise the efficiency of functions across the Council and our partners through shared resource arrangements and effective contract delivery.</li> <li>▪ Statutory functions are delivered, risks are mitigated and feedback is used to engender a culture of continuous improvement.</li> <li>▪ Plans and training are in place and resourced to deal with a range of emergencies. Business continuity is in place.</li> <li>▪ All Directorate/Federation information is held securely, safely and in line with legal and statutory requirements.</li> <li>▪ Ensure effective measures are in place to manage and mitigate risk to protect the liability of the Directorate/Federation and wider Council.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Essential Qualifications and Experience</b></p>	<p><b>Essential Skills and Behaviours</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Degree or relevant professional/management qualification.</li> <li>▪ Substantial record of senior strategic leadership achievement and experience consistently developing strategies and translating them into effective operational plans gained in a large, complex, multi-disciplinary organisation.</li> <li>▪ Substantial knowledge and experience of a range of modern professional services including , Finance, HROD, HSW, ICT, and customer facing services gained in a large complex multi-disciplinary organisation.</li> <li>▪ Experience of implementing complex policy matters and projects to cost and time constraints.</li> <li>▪ Experience of successful implementation of organisational / cultural change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Able to be a collaborative system leader across council and wider with focus on community and citizens.</li> <li>▪ Able to work as part of a high functioning senior management team, collaborating and negotiating with colleagues and partners on cross cutting matters to deliver objectives jointly.</li> <li>▪ Able to translate complex strategies into what is required to deliver cultural, organisational and technological improvements.</li> <li>▪ Able to translate vision, complex concepts, financial information, principles and practices into clear compelling organisational strategies and plans.</li> <li>▪ Financial acumen to be able to interpret and interrogate complex financial information. Ability to identify income generation opportunities/income streams in own</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Experience of deploying commercial and transformational acumen within large organisations.</li> <li>▪ Substantial experience in working effectively and impartially with elected members/senior board/executive members and in supporting democratic decision-making processes.</li> <li>▪ Experience of working in a political or democratic environment.</li> <li>▪ Experience of engaging and involving communities to whom statutory or other services are provided.</li> <li>▪ Experience of using a range of change management and transformation methodologies to deliver impactful organisational change at pace.</li> <li>▪ Experience of working and succeeding in complex partnership arrangements.</li> <li>▪ Experience of leading a large multidisciplinary workforce to drive performance and a successful culture.</li> <li>▪ Experience of working as a visible System Leader.</li> <li>▪ Experience of working within and promoting a health and safety and safeguarding culture.</li> <li>▪ Demonstrable commitment and experience of celebrating and valuing diversity.</li> </ul>	<p>Directorate/Federation in line with Council vision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accounting skills and strong financial awareness to include revenue and capital, treasury management strategies, pension investment and asset management.</li> <li>▪ Able to understand performance management systems and methods to drive continuous improvement.</li> <li>▪ Ability to coach and mentor others to improve and build a high performance culture.</li> <li>▪ Ability to act as the vanguard in driving up the quality of customer experience at all levels and be able to demonstrate quantifiable change in this area.</li> <li>▪ Ability to develop and maintain effective dialogue with local MP's and other agents of central government, providers of key public services and representatives of major and prospective investors to protect and promote the best interests of the city.</li> <li>▪ Able to challenge in a constructive manner to tackle potential financial risks, including fraud, to the organisation.</li> </ul>
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