

Chief Officer Appointments Panel



Date of meeting:	21 March 2025
Title of Report:	Recruitment to the role of Service Director – Education, Participation & Skills
Lead Member:	Councillor Sally Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships)
Lead Strategic Director:	David Haley (Director of Children’s Services)
Author:	Chris Squire (Service Director HROD)
Contact Email:	Chris Squire@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	Click here to enter text.
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report updates Members on the permanent recruitment to the role of Service Director Education, Participation and Skills.

Recommendations and Reasons

It is recommended that the Chief Officer Appointments Panel

1. Note the content of this report.
2. Agree to undertake a permanent recruitment process for the post of Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills
3. Approve the procurement of an executive search agency to support this recruitment process.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Alternative options considered are to leave the role vacant or extend the current interim arrangements. These options have been rejected on the basis that it is essential to recruit permanently to this key role which is responsible for driving up education standards, providing access to learning and supporting learning needs. It is responsible for developing and maintaining strong relationships with educational providers in the City.

The recommendation is in line with the Council’s established practices and is offered as the best option in these particular circumstances. It is essential that the role is filled permanently as soon as possible to deliver a range of statutory duties for the Local Authority and to support the delivery of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

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 Service Director for Education Participation and Skills is a permanent role with established budget contained within the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Financial Risks

There are no financial risks associated with this proposal.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

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

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

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

All recruitment and selection processes will be undertaken with reference to Plymouth City Council's established procedures and relevant legislation.

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

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:

**Add rows as required to box below*

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

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: David Haley, Director of Children's Services

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes

Date agreed: 11/03/2025

Cabinet Member approval. Councillor Cresswell approved by email

Date approved: 11/03/2025

1. 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 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

Reporting to the Director of Children's Services, the Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills (EPS) is a key role to drive up education standards, provide access to learning and support learning needs. It is responsible for developing and maintaining strong relationships with educational providers in the City including Higher Education, Further Education, Schools and Early Years settings. The role will lead the implementation of the Local Area SEND Improvement Plan and establish new ways of service delivery in an integrated multi-disciplinary locality model. In common with the Service Director for CYPF the role has a strong focus as a champion for vulnerable children, including access to and provision of Early Help across the Local Authority and wider partnership system.

Following a meeting of the Chief Officer Appointments Panel on 13 December 2024, Amanda Davis was appointed on an interim basis, for a 6 month period, with the option to extend for 3 months, subject to Cabinet approval. The previous permanent postholder resigned and left the Council at the end of January 2025.

4. RECRUITMENT TO PERMANENT POST

This paper proposes that Plymouth City Council commences the process to seek a permanent appointment to the Service Director for Education Participation and Skills.

It is also proposed that the Chief Officer Appointments Panel agree to the appointment of an executive search agency following a procurement process.

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/October 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.

The current interim arrangements are in place for six months, but with an option to extend, subject to Cabinet approval, for a further three months should this be required.

5. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The permanent role is established on the Plymouth City Council Senior Management Structure.

The role is currently a Band 4 Chief Officer within the chief officer pay and grading structure and the salary is currently within the range of £85,023 to £118,213 per annum. Chief Officer pay is linked to national pay bargaining.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Appointments Panel:

1. Note the contents of this report;
2. Agree to undertake a permanent recruitment process for the post of Service Director for Education, Participation and Skills;
3. Approve the procurement of an executive search agency to support this recruitment process.

SERVICE DIRECTOR

EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION AND SKILLS



Grade and Tier	Chief Officer – Band 4	Reference:	COF009
Reports to:	Director of Children’s Services	Job Type:	Strategic Leader
Role Purpose			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lead on the development and implementation of the Council’s strategy for learning, SEND and inclusion, skills and employability and inclusion and the partnership with educational settings and business for children, young people, citizens, families and communities. ▪ Enable Strategic Directors to focus on driving the Council’s overall objectives at a city, sub region, regional and national level. ▪ Communicate the vision of the Council and motivate and influence others to acquire this. <p>Member of the Federation for: People, Children’s and Public Health Directorates; encouraging best use of resources, avoiding duplication and silo working, facilitating knowledge transfer between the senior team.</p> <p>Statutory and Key Responsibilities/Accountabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategic lead in ensuring the Local Authority performs its statutory functions as set out in relevant legislation, including a sufficiency of school places and acts as a champion for vulnerable children and their families. 			
Key Responsibilities			
<p>Corporate and Organisational</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide strong, visible leadership and direction through compelling communication of the Council’s vision and values to own Department, Federation and wider where necessary ▪ Act as the principal policy and professional advisor on education, school improvement and performance, access to learning and learner achievement and skills matters within own Department and provide specific subject matter expertise and advice to Directors, Chief Executive and Members as required. ▪ Ensure own department delivers the policies set by elected members, ensuring all staff understand and act on the aims of the organisation, in order to meet the needs of the people of Plymouth ▪ Embed climate change actions across the functions of the Children’s Services department contributing to core reductions in support of the Council’s pledge to become carbon neutral by 2030. <p>Performance and Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take lead responsibility for the overall management of the Department, with particular reference to the development and implementation of the wider Education, Participation and Skills agenda ensuring the Council’s financial, human resources and other assets are planned, deployed and managed effectively to deliver the priorities. ▪ Ensure the department provides cost effective and efficient services for customers. ▪ Embed a positive, innovative culture, which responds effectively and efficiently to deliver an outstanding customer focused service with best in class policies and practices which respond continually to the changing internal and external environments. 			

Customer 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 and own Department and deepen the Council's understanding of those it exists to serve.
- Create an environment and culture that empowers and requires employees to work collaboratively and effectively across the Department, with the Directorate/Federation, organisation and with partners.
- Leads and challenges own direct 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 and engage in mutually beneficial relationships with partners and, where appropriate, integration of service delivery, to successfully deliver expected outcomes and benefits for the City.
- Fulfil a proactive role at local, regional and if appropriate national level in promoting and advocating for the City and its communities to deliver improvements and opportunities for residents and businesses.

Governance

- Ensure the statutory duties of the Department are met in accordance with legislation, guidance and regulatory requirements.
- Ensure effective measures are in place to manage and mitigate risk to protect the liability of the Department (including civil contingencies).

Role Accountabilities	Role Outcomes
<p>Corporate and organisational</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lead the EPS Management Team ▪ Lead for ensuring the Local Authority performs its statutory functions as set out in relevant legislation, including a sufficiency of school places and champion for vulnerable children and their families. ▪ Lead and champion the Child Poverty Strategy. ▪ Develop and maintain strong relationships with educational providers in the City including Higher Education, Further Education, Schools, and Early Years settings. <p>Performance and Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accountable for the delivery of the departmental budgets as aligned to the corporate plan. ▪ Ensure there is an appropriate performance framework in place to manage service performance and delivery objectives within department. ▪ Accountable for the Dedicated Schools Grant and other passported funding to schools. <p>Customer and Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensures services within own department are focused on continuous improvement within agreed levels of customer satisfaction to best meet the needs of internal and external customers and citizens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Local Authority plays a strong role in driving up education standards, providing access to learning and supporting learning needs and fulfilling the Local Authority role as champion for vulnerable children and families ▪ Managers are provided with the right level of consistent advice and support and coached to deliver good people management practices. ▪ There is a collaborative approach to managing Trade Union/professional association and other relationships relating to employment matters. ▪ EPS workforce understand the Council's values, priorities and desired outcomes. There is demonstrable evidence of engagement and progress. ▪ The performance management framework is clearly communicated, implemented and monitored to ensure good performance is recognised, including appropriate monitoring and plans for prioritised improvement, including school improvement strategies and interventions. ▪ Performance is managed by outcomes and poor performance is addressed quickly. ▪ EPS has a long term financial strategy and plan (MTFP) which is clear and actively

- Ensure that vulnerable people's needs are being met in the City
- Ensure efficient processes and ease of use business focused support to customers.
- Facilitate a culture change programme to support the organisation's transition to a customer focused culture.

Partnerships and External Relationships

- Create and manage effective relationships and partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders, building support amongst them in order to deliver better public services.
- Promote the city by supporting and participating in key corporate events
- Build a consistent approach to leadership styles across the organisation to derive an empowered leadership culture.

Governance

- Deliver the statutory functions within EPS.
- The Council's obligation for safeguarding of vulnerable groups is reflected across all areas of service delivery.
- Member of Tactical Command team for civil emergencies and business continuity in liaison with the police/other agencies as appropriate. Member of the out of hour's rota.
- Ensure the Department is compliant with all statutory, regulatory, safeguarding and audit requirements, including, where applicable, those of Ofsted, CQC, Health and Safety Executive and Information Security.

communicated to CMT, Members and the wider departmental workforce. The revenue and capital budget is delivered within agreed tolerances.

- EPS is able to demonstrate how it is performing against a range of performance indicators. Action is taken if performance fails to meet required standards.
- Strong networks have been established in the region and the city has received demonstrable investment from a range of funding agencies, from partners, from grants.
- EPS services make a demonstrable contribution to Plymouth being recognised as a great place to learn and work because of the services it delivers.
- Front line services and improved outcomes for the community are efficiently delivered.
- Customer experience and satisfaction is improved and there are measures in place to demonstrate that. Clear plans are in place where satisfaction is low.
- Strong networks are established in the region to best maximise investment from a range of funding agencies/from grants/from partners.
- Key partnerships are developed which have delivered better outcomes for Plymouth's employees/citizens.
- Statutory functions are delivered, risks are mitigated and feedback is used to engender a culture of continuous improvement.
- Plans and training are in place and resourced to deal with a range of emergencies. Business continuity is in place.
- All EPS information is held securely, safely and in line with legal and statutory requirements.
- Effective measures are in place to manage and mitigate risk to protect the liability of the department and wider Council.
- Effective measures are in place to manage and mitigate risk to protect the liability of the department and wider Council. Feedback is used to engender a culture of continuous improvement

Essential Qualifications and Experience	Essential Skills and Behaviours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Substantial experience of leading and developing a successful system for education and learner achievement. ▪ Strong record of delivery and improvement of education attainment and school improvement strategies. Understanding of the Council's statutory responsibilities for learners, attendance, SEN provision and education delivery. ▪ Substantial experience of maintaining high safeguarding standards and understanding of systems to protect vulnerable groups. ▪ Strong record of delivery and improvement of whole system change and development of effective commissioning strategies. ▪ Evidential ability to have identified strategies for collecting and using market and client data to drive performance improvements and efficiency. ▪ Strong record of the involvement of service users in the design and determination of services within the relevant sectors ▪ Leadership experience in a culture change environment ▪ Experience of deploying commercial and transformational acumen within medium or large organisations. ▪ Experience of developing strategies and translating them into effective operational plans gained in a multi-disciplinary organisation. ▪ Experience in working effectively and impartially with elected members/senior board/executive members and in supporting democratic decision-making processes. ▪ A broad knowledge of public sector service delivery including direct delivery and commissioning of third party contracts / SLAs. ▪ Experience of engaging and involving communities to whom statutory or other services are provided. ▪ Proven experience of commissioning/delivering services to achieve quality and value for money for customers. ▪ Understanding of the principles of System Leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Able to be a collaborative system leader across council with focus on culture change and transformational leadership. ▪ Able to effectively manage and motivate a diverse team of employees, enabling them to deliver quality customer services. ▪ Able to translate complex strategies into what is required to deliver cultural, organisational and technological improvements. ▪ Able to work as part of a high functioning non siloed Directorate Team ▪ Able to translate vision, complex concepts, financial information, principles and practices into clear compelling organisational strategies and plans. ▪ Business planning skills - including analysing demand, priorities, trends and predicting future customer needs. ▪ Commercial acumen to be able to interpret and interrogate complex financial and other information. ▪ Ability to think innovatively to identify income generation opportunities/income streams in own Department in line with Council vision. ▪ Able to understand performance management systems and methods to drive continuous improvement for customers. ▪ Ability to influence, coach and mentor others to improve and build a high performance culture. ▪ Authentic and effective communication skills. ▪ Ability to challenge in a constructive manner, not afraid to tackle difficult behaviour and situations. ▪ Stakeholder management skills within the public and private sector. Ability to develop and maintain effective dialogue and develop trust with stakeholders including other Service Directors, Directors, CMT, politicians and partners who provide of key public services, to protect and promote the best interests of the city. ▪ Ability to deal with competing interests while maintaining effective working relationships and a productive work environment.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Experience of using a range of change management and transformation methodologies to deliver impactful organisational change at pace.▪ Experience of working and succeeding in complex partnership arrangements.▪ Experience of leading a multidisciplinary workforce to drive performance and a successful culture.▪ Experience of working within and promoting a health and safety and safeguarding culture.▪ Demonstrable commitment and experience of celebrating and valuing diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Advanced negotiation and influencing skills, with the ability to establish pragmatic solutions and agreed outcomes.▪ Political awareness and acumen.▪ Innovative and able to challenge traditional ways of doing things in a positive, constructive way.
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