

Date of meeting: 26 January 2026

Title of Report: **Extension of Designation of SI51 Role**

Lead Member: Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance)

Lead Strategic Director: Si Bellamy, Chief Operating Officer

Author: Chris Squire

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Your Reference:

Key Decision: No

Confidentiality: Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

This report seeks approval to extend the designation of the statutory role of Section 151 Officer.

At its meeting on 24 November 2025, the City Council designated Mr David Northey as the interim SI51 Officer for Plymouth City Council, from 17 December 2025 to 28 February 2026. A recruitment exercise is currently underway for the permanent role.

Recommendations and Reasons

That Council extends the designation of the Council's interim Service Director for Finance, David Northey, as the section 151 Officer for the Council for the period from 28 February 2026 to 30 April 2026.

Reason: The appointment of a Section 151 Officer is a statutory requirement as outlined within Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 also requires that the post holder is a member of one of the Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies.

The designation of an officer to act as the Council's Section 151 Officer is a decision for the City Council.

Alternative options considered and rejected

None, the appointment of a Section 151 Officer is a statutory requirement.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The delivery of the Corporate Plan is underpinned by the delivery of services that are accountable, flexible and efficient despite a reduction in resources.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

The cost of employing a Service Director for Finance is included in the Council Budget 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Financial Risks

The post is a permanent role with established budget contained within the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Legal Implications

Under s151 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council is required to designate one of its officers to have responsibility for the proper administration of its financial affairs. City Council is required to approve the designation.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

No implications.

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.

No implications.

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	Briefing report title							

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: Si Bellamy (Chief Operating Officer)
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 16/01/2026
Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Mark Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) Date approved: 19/01/2026

DESIGNATION OF s151 OFFICER

1. Authority and Responsibilities

- 1.1 The appointment of the Section 151 Officer/Responsible Finance Officer is personal to that officer and once appointed by Council, s/he has personal responsibilities to the Council as a whole.
- 1.2 The Council's Constitution (Part A, Section 10.4) sets out the main duties of the Responsible Finance Officer/Section 151 Officer:
 - To make sure decisions are lawful and financially prudent. After consulting with the Head of Paid Service and the Monitoring Officer, the Responsible Finance Officer will report to the Full Council and the Council's external auditor if he/she considers that any proposal, decision or course of action would incur unlawful expenditure, or is unlawful and is likely to cause a loss or deficiency, or if the Council is about to enter an item of account unlawfully.
 - To administer financial affairs. The Responsible Finance Officer will have responsibility for the administration of the financial affairs of the Council.
 - To contribute to corporate management. The Responsible Finance Officer will contribute to the corporate management of the Council, in particular through the provision of professional financial advice.
 - To provide advice. The Responsible Finance Officer or designee will provide advice on the scope of powers and authority to take decisions, maladministration, financial impropriety, probity and budget and policy framework issues to all Councillors and will support and advise Councillors and officers in their respective roles.
 - Providing financial information. The Responsible Finance Officer or designee will provide financial information to the media, members of the public and the community.
 - Restrictions on Post. The Responsible Finance Officer cannot be the Monitoring Officer. The Head of Paid Service and the Responsible Finance Officer can be the same person but the Responsible Finance Officer must be a qualified accountant.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Chief Officer Appointments Panel met on 19 November 2025. Following this interview, Mr David Northey was offered the post of interim Service Director for Finance and agreed on a return to the council on a temporary basis whilst a recruitment exercise was undertaken for the permanent role.
- 2.2 The previous permanent Service Director for Finance left the Council on 16 December 2025.
- 2.3 The Chief Officer Appointments Panel will meet on 6 February to interview candidates for the permanent position.

3. Recommendations and Reasons

- 3.1 That David Northey is designated as the interim S151 officer for Plymouth City Council, from 28 February 2026 until 30 April 2026.
- 3.2 The appointment of a Section 151 Officer is a statutory requirement as outlined within Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.