



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	Council: Wednesday 13 May 2020
Report Number	Agenda Item No. 9
Subject	Chief Finance Officer/ Deputy Chief Executive (Statutory Section 151 Officer) Role
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr James Mills, Leader Email: James.Mills@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Email: Giles.Hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the proposed permanent full time Chief Finance Officer/ Deputy Chief Executive role, which would also be the Council's statutory Section 151 Officer. The report also states that an interim appointment to the Section 151 Officer role may be necessary in advance of the completion of the recruitment process for the permanent role. The budget for a full time Chief Finance Officer/ Deputy Chief Executive role was approved by Council in February 2020.
Annex	Annex A - Job Description and Employee Specification
Recommendations	(a) That the report be noted; (b) That the outcome of the interview process for the Chief Finance Officer/Deputy Chief Executive be considered, and if appropriate the appointment of a candidate be approved, subject to the successful completion of post-interview checks and processes; and (c) That the Council determines an interim appointment to the Section 151 role should that be necessary.
Corporate priorities	Modern Council Services and Sustainable Finance - Delivering excellent modern services whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council.
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	N/A

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. Late last year Cotswold District Council informed the Council that it no longer wished to share a Finance Officer (Section 151) role. This retained role is a key role for both of the Councils, and there was a concern that a shared role was no longer appropriate given the importance of its responsibilities and the scale of future challenges.
- 1.2. The Council is required to employ a Section 151 Officer and so as a consequence it needs to make alternative arrangements. A full time Chief Finance Officer/Deputy Chief Executive role is proposed to strengthen the Council's retained officer structure and to act as the Section 151 Officer. Recruitment to this role is currently underway. An interim approach may be required from 13 May 2020 to cover any gap before a permanent appointment is made. Given the statutory nature of both permanent and interim roles these appointments need to be agreed by Council.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. A copy of the Job description and employee specification for the Chief Finance Officer/Deputy Chief Executive role is [attached](#).
- 2.2. The Chief Finance Officer/Deputy Chief Executive will be the strategic financial lead within the Council and will work closely with Members, the Chief Executive and the rest of the senior management team. It will have Section 151 responsibility for ensuring the sound management of the Council's finances and resources. It will also play a key role in ensuring strong working relationships with key partners and guiding the development of wider strategies and plans.
- 2.3. Section 151 Officers have a number of statutory duties, including the duty to report any unlawful financial activity involving the authority (past, present or proposed) or failure to set or keep to a balanced budget.
- 2.4. The change from a shared role to a fulltime role will help strengthen the management and leadership capacity of the Council, which is important given the financial and COVID 19 recovery related challenges facing local government. In addition, there do not appear to be any realistic options for sharing a Chief Finance Officer role with any of the neighbouring Councils at present.
- 2.5. The recruitment process for the role is underway. Interviews are expected to take place in the weeks beginning 4 and 11 May. An update will be provided at Council. It is likely that an interim appointment will need to be made to a Section 151 role at Council which will need to remain in place until a new permanent Chief Finance Officer/Deputy Chief Executive commences employment with the Council.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. None. Additional funding of £50,000 for the new Chief Finance Officer/Deputy Chief Executive full time post is included within the 2020/21 budget. Interim arrangements, including any backfilling that might be necessary, can also be funded from this budget.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The Council is required to have a Section 151 Officer.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. The Chief Finance Officer/ Deputy Chief Executive role will help manage financial and other risks facing the Council.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1. The Council is required to have a Section 151 officer. The Council could choose to have a more narrowly focussed role and could choose to apply a different salary.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1. None

Job description and employee specification

Job title:	Chief Finance Officer	Location:	Witney
Reports to:	Chief Executive	Working hours:	37 hours per week
Job number:	CE003	Salary range:	Up to £75,000 p.a.
Supervises:	Not applicable (the post holder will deputise for the Chief Executive)		
Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To lead and direct the Council's financial strategy and operations, with its service delivery partner Publica taking Section 151 responsibility for ensuring the sound management of the Council's finances and resources. To support and deputise for the Chief Executive in ensuring strong working relationships with key partners, and in providing strategic advice on policy, performance and commissioning, in order to enable the delivery of the Council's priorities, objectives and plans, in an efficient and effective way within the resources allocated. For guidance on the statutory and non-statutory duties associated with this role please see the additional document – CIPFA - The Role of Chief Finance Officer (CFO). 		
Key responsibilities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the Council has effective policies and strategies that deliver the Council's priorities and long term financial sustainability. Lead the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and the annual budgeting setting process, and budget monitoring processes engaging with Publica staff. Perform the statutory duties of the Section 151 Officer. Support the Chief Executive in developing and maintaining strong relationships with key partners and stakeholders. Input into the Council's commissioning of services, ensuring the services provided by Publica, Ubico and other providers efficiently meet the Council's priorities. Work with the Publica Finance Director to ensure that the objectives set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Council budgets are met. Promote the Council's interests as a shareholder in Publica and Ubico Limited. Develop and maintain positive working relationships with elected members. Promote good governance by upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour and ensuring there is transparency and accountability in decision-making. Ensure that corporate risks are identified and evaluated, and that internal control processes are in place. Support and provide professional advice to the Council, Cabinet, Committees and all Members, to enable them to act in accordance with current legislation and best practice. To act as the Council's Client Officer for internal audit services which are provided by SWAP Internal Audit Services and to support the Chair of the Audit and General Purposes Committee in the role of the Member Board of SWAP Internal Audit Services. 		



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To act as the Council's Client Officer for the Counter Fraud Service which is a shared service hosted by Cotswold District Council. This will include representing the Council on the Counter Fraud Partnership Board. <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out such other duties as the Council may reasonably require. <p>This job description sets out the key outcomes required. It does not specify in detail the activities required to achieve these outcomes.</p> <p>General Accountabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working to add value to, and be a valued member of the team, and to be valued by customers The post holder is responsible to maintain a safe working environment and ensure as reasonably practicable that safe working practices are adopted by employees within this work environment Work in compliance with the Codes of Conduct, Regulations and policies Exercise proper and absolute integrity in respect of all confidential matters and the confidentiality of personal and sensitive information;
<p>Essential requirements, qualifications, skills and abilities:</p>	<p>Qualifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCAB recognised accounting qualification Educated to degree level or equivalent <p>Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive post qualification experience at a senior level within an accountancy and audit environment Experience of providing strategic direction and strong leadership in a previous senior Finance or management role Experience of providing advice, information and support to members and external parties with minimal supervision Extensive experience of successful strategic financial management, financial planning and budget preparation Proven ability to implement and monitor highly effective and efficient financial controls Experience of preparing and presenting accurate and timely financial statements and comprehensive commentary in accordance with relevant regulations/ guidelines Experience of report writing and presenting at Committee / Board level and at Corporate Team level <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A high level of skill in working across a broad range of technical accounting subject areas Ability to interpret and communicate financial information at an advanced level An ability to interpret and communicate complex financial information in plain English to non-financial managers and members Ability to work to tight deadlines and meet conflicting demands Communicates effectively at all levels (excellent verbal and written skills) Good practical level of IT skills - MS Office Demonstrate integrity, fairness and high personal and professional standards. Achieves results through others Sound management judgement and personal credibility Is customer focussed, responsive, and co-operative with customers



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proactive and self-motivated• Flexible approach to work• Works together with employees, colleagues and members to resolve problems and implement change initiatives• Ability to work to tight deadlines and meet conflicting demands• Ability to maintain confidentiality in accordance with Data Protection	
Desirable requirements qualifications, skills and abilities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Previous experience of undertaking duties of Chief Finance Officer as set out in section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972• Previous experience of working in Local Government	
Special conditions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There may be a requirement to work at other locations to meet the needs of the business• There will be a requirement to attend evening committee meetings• The requirement to travel will be an essential feature of the performance of the above duties• Expected to work reasonable additional hours in line with the needs of the service• You will the need use of a car for work purposes	
Date of Issue:	March 2020	
Date reviewed:		
Reviewed by	Giles Hughes	Job Title: Chief Executive