



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and Date of Committee	COUNCIL – 19 JULY 2023
Subject	APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF FINANCE (SECTION 151 OFFICER)
Wards Affected	All
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Officer. Email: Giles.Hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Officer. Email: Giles.Hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Purpose	To consider the appointment of a Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) for West Oxfordshire, following interviews by the Performance and Appointments Committee, and to outline interim arrangements.
Annex	Annex A – Job Description and Employee Specification, Director of Finance. Annex B – Draft Minutes of Performance and Appointments Committee, 17 July 2023 (To Follow).
Recommendations	That Council Resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Confirm the appointment of the Director of Finance set out in the draft minutes of the Performance and Appointments Committee meeting 17 July 2023 (Annex B, To Follow);2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Performance and Appointments Committee, to agree final contractual details once references, medical clearance and eligibility checks (BPSS check) are concluded in accordance with the Council's policies;3. Agree the appointment commences on a date to be mutually agreed between the successful candidate and the Chief Executive;4. Confirm the appointment of an Interim Director of Finance, James

	Howse, who will undertake the role of Section 151 Officer, until the appointed, permanent Director of Finance is able to take up post.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Putting Residents First ● A Good Quality of Life for All ● A Better Environment for People and Wildlife ● Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency ● Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>The Performance and Appointments Committee were summoned to conduct interviews with candidates on Monday 17 July, following a recruitment campaign using Tile Hill Management Consultancy.</p> <p>The recommendations from the Committee are to be outlined at Council. A separate process was also underway with Tile Hill to identify an Interim Section 151 Officer to cover the period before a new permanent Director can start.</p>

I. BACKGROUND

- I.1** The Council's Deputy Chief Executive / Chief Finance Officer (CFO) role is due to become vacant due to the resignation of the post holder, Elizabeth Griffiths. The post is due to be vacant from 1st September 2023. This existing role is designated as the Council's statutory Section 151 Officer.
- I.2** Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, requires local authorities to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs, and appoint a Section 151 Officer to have responsibility for those arrangements. As such, the Section 151 Officer must lead on a local authority's financial functions and ensure they are fit for purpose. CFOs must be professionally qualified and suitably experienced.
- I.3** A Section 151 Officer must be a member of one of the following bodies in order to qualify as a responsible officer:
 - a)** the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales;
 - b)** the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland;
 - c)** the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants;
 - d)** the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy;
 - e)** the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland;
 - f)** the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants; and
 - g)** any other body of accountants established in the United Kingdom and for the time being approved by the Secretary of State for this purpose.
- I.4** Following the receipt of the resignation, the Chief Executive carried out a review of the job description and employee specification, and discussed this with the Performance and Appointments Committee. The title of the role has been changed to Director of Finance, to be consistent with the Director of Governance role that also reports to the Chief Executive. The role will also act as the Council's Section 151 Officer.
- I.5** A copy of the revised job description and employee specification is attached in Annex A.
- I.6** The Council's Performance and Appointments Committee has delegated authority to consider the terms and conditions of the Council's statutory roles. It also makes recommendations to Council on the appointment of statutory roles. Decisions on appointments/designations to the statutory roles are responsibility of Council.
- I.7** The timetable for the recruitment process was as follows:
 - Performance and Appointments Committee considered job description and salary, 15th June 2023;
 - Job Advert went live and Executive Search commenced on 19 June 2023;
 - Applications closed on 10 July 2023;
 - Shortlisting and technical interviews held during week commencing 10th July 2023;
 - Performance and Appointments Committee Interviews, 17th July 2023; and

- Council consideration, 19th July 2023

1.8 The Performance and Appointments Committee consists of:

- Cllr Andy Graham – Chair
- Cllr Duncan Enright
- Cllr Dan Levy
- Cllr Michele Mead
- Cllr Liam Walker

1.9 The Committee is supported by the Chief Executive.

1.10 Georgina Dyer, the Council's Chief Accountant is the current Deputy Section 151 Officer.

2. MAIN POINTS

2.1 The Director of Finance is a key role for the Council and will act as the Council's Section 151 Officer. The role will be part of the council's Corporate Management Team, working closely with the Chief Executive, the Director of Governance, Publica locality leads, elected members, and partners to help the Council to manage its finances and deliver on its priorities in the current challenging financial environment.

2.2 The recruitment process for the role nearing completion. Formal interviews with shortlisted candidates by the Performance and Appointments Committee are planned for 17 July 2023. Council will be updated on any recommendations from the Committee on suitable candidates for appointment.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1 The Council could decide not to appoint a Director of Finance. This would seriously reduce the statutory officer capacity, and would require an existing officer to be designated as the Section 151 Officer to allow the Council to fulfil its legal obligations. This course of action is not recommended.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Performance and Appointments Committee agreed that the salary for this position would be £85,000 per annum plus a pending pay award. The pay award is expected to take effect from April 2023 and to increase the salary to approximately £88,000.

4.2 The salary represents an increase from the existing salary of £80,000 for the Chief Finance Officer/Deputy Chief Executive in recognition of the competitive jobs market for this senior finance role. The increase in cost will represent growth in the revenue budget which will need to be financed from additional reserve utilisation in the first instance.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council has a duty to appoint to the statutory role of Section 151 Officer. The Performance and Appointments Committee may recommend who to appoint to the Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer role, but no appointment can be made without the formal approval of Council.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 If Council does not agree to appoint a Director of Finance, then there is a risk that the Council may not fulfil the statutory responsibilities covered by this role, which may also risk the delivery against the Council's Council Plan priorities.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1 The recruitment is following best practice with a fair, equal and transparent process, reducing bias and designed to select the strongest candidate on merit.

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 None

(END)