

Council

13 May 2025

Part 1 - Public

Matters for Decision



Cabinet Member	Not applicable
Responsible Officer	Damian Roberts, Chief Executive
Report Author	Mathew Brooks, Head of HR & Development

Recruitment to the new Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer position.

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Subject to a decision by the General Purposes Committee on 12 May 2025, to consider arrangements for the permanent appointment of the newly created post, Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer.
- 1.2 To agree to the formation and appointment of a Member Panel tasked with making a recommendation to Full Council as to the appointment of a permanent Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer.
- 1.3 To agree to the appointment of a specialist recruitment search and selection partner, following an appropriate procurement process, to manage the process of the of the search and selection of the Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer post.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 mandates that local authorities make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and appoint a Section 151 Officer to be responsible for those arrangements.
- 2.3 This role ensures that the council's financial functions are effectively managed and that the authority's resources are properly administered, acting as a trustee for taxpayers' money.
- 2.4 In accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1988 the Chief Finance 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 the purposes of this section.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 To agree to the formation of a Member Panel to make the permanent appointment to the post of Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer.
- 3.2 To agree to the Council appointing a specialist recruitment search and selection partner to lead on the recruitment and selection of the Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer post.
- 3.3 That a one-off budget of £25,000 be approved for the costs of recruitment, to be funded through a supplementary estimate from the General Revenue Reserve.

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 As Members will be aware the Council's Director of Finance and Transformation, Sharon Shelton, has formally handed in her notice and will be retiring from the Council on 31 August 2025, with her last working day being 25 July 2025.
- 4.2 Sharon is retiring after more than 42 years' service with the Council, over 20 years of which have been served with distinction as the Council's Director of Finance.
- 4.3 A proposal to delete the Director of Finance and Transformation post with effect 1 September 2025 and create a new Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer post was presented at a meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 12 May 2025.
- 4.4 Whilst the proposed new post is not a Director post, it is a Statutory Chief Officer post due to the requirement for the postholder to discharge the statutory function of being the Council's Section 151 Officer.
- 4.5 The Council's Constitution contains Officer Employment Procedure Rules in relation to the Appointment of Chief Officers other than the Chief Executive that provide:

- *The appointment of Chief Officers* other than the Chief Executive will be made by a Panel of Members appointed by the Council for that purpose. This panel will include at least one member of the Executive.*
- *An offer of employment shall only be made where no well-founded objection from any member of the Executive has been received*

*Members are asked to note that in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001, matters relating to the appointment of a Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) are reserved to full Council. Given this statutory requirement, the Panel will agree and make a recommendation to the next meeting of full Council following the recruitment process.

- 4.6 Whilst the outcome of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 12 May 2025 is not known at the time of writing, this report is proposing that Full Council agrees to the formation of a Member Panel to make a recommendation as to the Council's new Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer.
- 4.7 In addition, this report is seeking agreement to appoint a specialist executive search partner to lead on the search and selection for suitably qualified applicants to become the Council's new Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer.

5 Proposal

- 5.1 As stated above the Council's Constitution contains Officer Employment Procedure Rules which require Chief Officer appointments to be made by a panel of Members.
- 5.2 A supplementary report will follow with proposals as to the panel's composition.
- 5.3 Due to the specialist skillset and seniority of the post, it is fundamental that the Council attracts the best candidates available to apply. It is equally important to ensure that a rigorous selection and testing process of the candidates' skills and abilities is undertaken before the final Member panel interview. It is anticipated that the assessment process will include multiple stages before the final stage Member interview panel.
- 5.4 Working with a specialist recruitment search and selection partner who specialises in senior local government appointments will be vital. This will ensure that the Council attracts the right calibre of candidate and that they have been fully assessed to ensure that they have the requisite skillset to be to undertake the vital role of Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer.
- 5.5 The Council will undertake a procurement process by approaching different providers in the executive search market and appoint accordingly taking into consideration the quality of the submissions and associated costs.

6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 6.1 The estimated cost of appointing a specialist recruitment search and selection partner is £12,000 - £18,000. The associated media advertising costs is approximately £5-7k.
- 6.2 The costs of recruitment are to be funded through a proposed supplementary estimate from the General Revenue Reserve.

7 Risk Assessment

- 7.1 The recommendations in this report have been made in response to operational need and therefore mitigate against risk.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001, matters relating to the appointment of a Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) are reserved to full Council.
- 8.2 The proposals outlined in this report are compliant with the Council's Pay Policy Statement.
- 8.3 This report ensures that the Council has appointed a person to the statutory Section 151 Officer post.

9 Consultation and Communications

- 9.1 The changes set out in this report do not require formal employee consultation as set out in the Council's Reorganisation, Redundancy and Redeployment procedure.
- 9.2 All relevant staff have been kept fully informed about the proposed changes outlines in this report.

10 Implementation

- 10.1 The recruitment process will take place as soon as reasonably practicable following the meeting of Full Council.
- 10.2 The Director of Finance and Transformation is retiring on 31 August 2025, with her last working day being 25 July 2025.
- 10.3 The new post of Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer will be created with effect from 28 July 2025.

11 Cross Cutting Issues

- 11.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

11.1.1 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

11.2 Equalities and Diversity

11.2.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

11.3 Other If Relevant

- Human Resources (Pay Policy Statement)
- Procurement
- Business Continuity / Resilience

Background Papers	None
Annexes	None