

Durham County Council

At a Meeting of **Chief Officer Appointments Committee** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 10 April 2024** at **12.30 pm**

Present:

Councillor A Hopgood in the Chair

Members of the Committee:

Councillors R Bell (Vice-Chair), R Adcock-Forster, R Crute, O Gunn, E Scott, J Shuttleworth and S Zair (substitute for A Shield)

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr C Marshall and Cllr A Shield.

2 Substitute Members

Councillor S Zair substituted for Councillor A Shield.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any items of business on the agenda.

5 Recruitment to the post of Corporate Director of Adult and Health Services

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which provided options for recruiting to the post of Corporate Director of Adults and Health Services, following the announcement of the planned retirement of the current postholder in November 2024 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that the post was a Statutory post in nature and normal protocol would be to commence external recruitment with the support of an Executive Recruitment Consultancy who would support the Committee throughout the process.

However, the current financial pressures facing the Council meant that work had already commenced to consider savings for 2025/26 and over the medium term, meaning that there were alternative options available to the Committee. This included appointing an interim externally or seeking expressions of interest to cover the post on a temporary interim basis internally. This would allow the council time to consider whether there was a need for any more fundamental senior level structural changes. Taking account of the wider MTFP position and the development of savings options to cover the next 24 to 36 months, the Chief Executive felt that an internal interim appointment would be the most suitable option.

Councillor O Gunn commented that she had no issues with the proposals and was reassured that there would be interest in the capacity to backfill any posts arising from an internal interim appointment. Councillor Gunn highlighted this because Adult and Health Services was a Statutory function in a vulnerable area and it was important to continue to provide the best service for vulnerable people across County Durham. Councillor Gunn also asked if the appointment would impact on the up and coming CQC inspection.

The Chief Executive confirmed that there would be no risk in terms of the management arrangements and the current Corporate Director would in post until the completion of the CQC inspection.

Councillor R Bell asked if there were any additional costs and fallout further down the line within the structure. The Chief Executive confirmed that it would be a like for like backfilling situation and there wouldn't be a change in cost.

The Leader of the Council commented that the Council were in a good position given that there were well placed candidates internally that would be interested in applying for the opportunity. This would allow time to review the structure going forward.

Resolved

That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

6 Review of Governance Arrangements Durham County Council Statutory Officers

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which presented proposals for the Monitoring Officer (the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) to report directly to the Chief Executive, as part of the Golden Triangle of senior council officers, and to have a recognised status and

position within the top tier of governance within the organisation (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that the reviews referenced in the report took account of recent failures in governance in some authorities, and lessons learned.

Councillor R Crute commented that he had read through the report and the governance reviews. He highlighted that the common thread running throughout the issues related to safeguarding, strength and governance arrangements. He added that it made clear sense to cement that golden triangle relationship.

Councillor R Bell understood that there were no costs in terms of grading implications currently and sought clarification that this wouldn't change in 2/3 years' time.

The Chief Executive confirmed that there were no changes in the job that would necessitate any change in salary. There could be the potential for changes in senior management in future years but there would be no change to the job, and no change as to how teams operated.

In response to a question regarding deputising from Councillor O Gunn, the Chief Executive confirmed that current Head of Legal and Democratic Services deputised for him on occasions and that arrangement would continue going forward.

Councillor E Scott commented that she wasn't aware that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services was not a substantive member of the Corporate Management Team but felt that the move was correct and the justification in amending the governance arrangements were sound.

Resolved

That the recommendations in the report be agreed. The revised structure would be effective from 1 May 2024 (and not 2025) as set out in the report.