

## Chief Officer Appointments Committee

13 December 2024

### Recruitment to the Post of Corporate Director: Regeneration, Economy and Growth



## Report of John Hewitt, Chief Executive

### Purpose of the Report

- 1 To update the Chief Officer Appointments Committee (COAC) on proposals to amend the current role profile of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth, and to seek approval to commence an external recruitment exercise to fill the post, given the resignation of the current post holder.
- 2 To note the proposals to re-align two service areas from Regeneration, Economy and Growth to Resources and Neighbourhoods and Climate Change Directorate and to note the interim arrangements proposed for direct reports to the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth, ahead of any new Corporate Director joining the organisation.
- 3 To seek approval to engage the services of Executive Recruitment Consultants (PENNA), to support the recruitment process.

### Executive Summary

- 4 The current post holder of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth has submitted her resignation.
- 5 This has provided an opportunity for the Chief Executive to consider the areas of responsibility allocated to this post, alongside the various and significant projects which are currently ongoing which are associated within this Directorate, which are of significant importance to the council.
- 6 The report sets out some proposals to re-align two of the areas within the existing scope to other Corporate Director's and sets out the rationale for this decision.
- 7 The report also sets out the proposed interim reporting arrangements proposed for the period until a new Corporate Director is able to join the organisation.

- 8 COAC is asked to note the proposals and approve the commencement of an external recruitment process using PENNA, Executive Search and Recruitment Specialists based on the revised job description attached as Appendix 2. The salary for the post is £166,434.

**Recommendation(s)**

- 9 It is recommended that the Chief Officer Appointments Committee:
- (a) note the proposals to re-align two Heads of Service to other Corporate Director's on a permanent basis;
  - (b) to note the revised job description and remit of the post and agree for it to be advertised externally;
  - (c) agree to engage the services of PENNA (external recruitment consultants) to commence the external recruitment process;
  - (d) note the proposed temporary arrangements and reporting lines for Heads of Service in the interim between the existing post holder leaving the council and a new Corporate Director joining the council.

## Background

- 10 The current Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth has resigned to take up a new post with the East Midlands Combined Authority. As a result, the Chief Executive has considered the scope and remit of the post and scale of strategic and significant projects ongoing within this area.

## Proposals

- 11 As a result of this review, it is proposed that the following service areas will be re-aligned to other Corporate Directors on a permanent basis as set out below:
- (a) The Head of Transport and Contract Services will be re-aligned to the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change;
  - (b) The Head of Corporate Property and Land will be re-aligned to the Corporate Director of Resources.
- 12 The above changes reflect that there are synergies with the Corporate Director roles and directorates they are to be re-aligned to.
- 13 The alignment of the Head of Corporate Property and Land to the Corporate Director of Resources will enable the council's property assets, facilities and programmes to be linked to the leadership and management of the council's wider resources and assets through the Corporate Director of Resources. The re-alignment will also mean that any perceived or actual conflicts between the role of the council as landowner and local planning authority will be easier to manage if the roles are the responsibility of different Corporate Directors.
- 14 The alignment of the Head of Transport and Contract Services to the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change is reflective of links between highways and transport services and will provide an opportunity to consider new ways of working and further alignment across these service areas.
- 15 In considering these realignments, it is recognised that the council needs to operate corporately across all of its service groupings, and this approach will continue under these arrangements, with the opportunity to further build on this under the proposals set out.
- 16 The remaining Heads of Service reporting to the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth will therefore be as follows:
- (a) Head of Inclusive Growth and Partnerships;
  - (b) Head of Planning and Housing;
  - (c) Head of Culture, Tourism and Sport.

- 17 Interim arrangements have also been considered given the timing of the current post holder leaving the organisation and time required to conclude the recruitment process and allow any new appointee to fulfil their notice period with their current employer.
- 18 During this period, and to provide the necessary corporate oversight during the transition until the appointment of a new Corporate Director, it is proposed that the Head of Planning and Housing will report temporarily to the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change, and the Head of Culture, Tourism and Sport will report temporarily to the Chief Executive, given the links to the Leaders devolution portfolio for the North East Combined Authority.
- 19 These arrangements are considered the most suitable given the significant ongoing workload associated with the new Combined Authority and devolution deal and the focus on local and regional regeneration and economic development, alongside the need for stable strategic leadership of the areas set out in this report. The Chief Executive is confident that this approach is manageable in the short term until a new Corporate Director is appointed and in post, and also provides for a level of stability at Head of Service level during the transition to a new Corporate Director which is particularly important given the need to focus on the devolution agenda and ongoing major projects and initiatives across the council.
- 20 Given the imminent departure of the Head of Economic and Development, and the anticipated timing of the appointment to the Head of Inclusive Growth and Partnerships taking up post, expressions of interest will be opened internally for members of staff to step up into this role until a substantive appointee is able to join the council. In the interim and for the reasons set out in paragraph 19 and elsewhere in this report, this role will also report to the Chief Executive.
- 21 As a result of these changes, the updated job description for the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth is attached as Appendix 2.
- 22 In accordance with the process for recruiting to a Chief Officer role, this report sets out proposals to the COAC to agree to commence external recruitment to the post with the support of an Executive Recruitment Consultancy, (PENNA) who are the preferred supplier for the council for executive recruitment.
- 23 As with previous recruitment exercises the COAC will be afforded every opportunity to consider the candidates and to be engaged in the process.
- 24 It is proposed that should agreement be given to commence the recruitment process by external advertising, the recruitment process will commence shortly and a timetable drawn up which will set out the various stages of the process.

- 25 In accordance with recruitment at this level, PENNA will be assisting the council with the following stages:
- (a) advertisements, microsite and information for candidates;
  - (b) executive search;
  - (c) long listing (and meeting of COAC) to consider applicants and recommendations;
  - (d) technical interviews (undertaken by Consultancy);
  - (e) short listing (and meeting of COAC) to consider applicants and recommendations;
  - (f) final assessment days.
- 26 Prior to either long listing or short-listing meetings, a candidate report will be prepared and presented to the COAC to decide which candidates will progress to the next stage of the process.

### **Technical Interviews**

- 27 PENNA will work with a suitable Technical Assessor to carry out technical interviews with either long listed or short-listed candidates. The technical interview allows in- depth exploration into the candidates' experience, knowledge, skill base and motivations for applying for the role.

### **Final Stages**

- 28 As part of the final stages, an assessment day will be held, which will involve candidates meeting key stakeholders and possibly undertaking other exercises. The format for the assessment day will be agreed with the COAC. Final interviews will also involve the COAC.

### **Author(s)**

John Hewitt, Chief Executive

Alison Lazazzera, Head of Human Resources and Employee Services

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Under the council's Constitution and Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the appointment of Chief Officers is the responsibility of the Chief Officer Appointments Committee.

### **Finance**

The financial implications are the cost of engaging an Executive Recruitment Consultancy and any associated costs for the recruitment process such as advertising. The costs of the full exercise will be in the region of £25,000 which include costs for the full service.

### **Consultation**

Those Heads of Service affected by the changes outlined in the report have been consulted.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

The recruitment process will be conducted fairly in accordance with the council's recruitment policy and procedures.

### **Climate Change**

The proposals support the Council's priority on Climate Change.

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable

### **Crime and Disorder**

Not applicable

### **Staffing**

The changes set out in the report have been subject to consultation with those affected by the proposals.

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable

### **Risk**

None

### **Procurement**

The engagement of PENNA to support with this process is in line with the procurement requirements of the Council.

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## Appendix 2: Job Description and Person Specification

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**Job Title:** Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy & Growth

**Reports to:** Chief Executive Officer

**Direct Reports:** Heads of Service within Service Area

**Job Purpose:** To take a corporate role in supporting the Chief Executive, the Leader and the Cabinet to achieve the Council's vision for the residents and communities of County Durham. Take the lead role on the Council's approach to regeneration and economy, leading the delivery of services within the portfolio.

### **Corporate Responsibilities:**

Member of the Corporate Management Team developing a strong corporate approach to all aspects of council business. Ensuring all council assets, skills, resources, influence and intelligence are collectively focused to maximise impact on priority policy areas.

### **Key Corporate Tasks - shared accountability with the Chief Executive and other Corporate Directors to:**

- Develop, deliver and achieve strategic priorities, objectives, values and long-term vision for the council;
- Provide advice and support to Councillors;
- Develop and maintain a one organisation ethos with demonstrable commitment to corporate culture;
- Manage overall performance of the council;
- Ensure a corporate approach which provides visible and effective leadership, and which focuses on outcomes for customers and the community;
- Develop the Council's wider leadership role and delivery of effective partnership working;
- Lead on major cross-cutting theme(s) and/or whole council 'champion' for a geographical area;
- Ensure implementation of corporate policy covering the control of Health and Safety risks.

## **Service Responsibilities:**

The provision of all services within County Durham related to:

- Inclusive Growth and Partnerships;
- Housing and Planning;
- Culture, Sport and Tourism.

## **Key Directorate Tasks:**

- Lead on the development of strategy and policy;
- Lead on development and delivery of a customer focused approach, including the establishment of consultation frameworks and the development of services in response to feedback;
- Drive service excellence and sound financial management promoting a culture of value for money, innovation, performance management and empowerment amongst individuals and teams to ensure continuous improvement;
- Represent the Council at local, regional and national forums, and take the lead role in developing regional partnerships with the public, private and voluntary sectors;
- Ensure required responses are made to national agenda and legislation;
- Undertake any relevant statutory duties and responsibilities on behalf of the Council associated with the role;
- Ensure provision of advice and guidance to the Chief Executive, the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as required;
- Ensure the principles of equality and diversity and the Council's other corporate values are embraced and underpin all work for employees and service users;
- Accountable for the effective management and deployment of all resources;
- Build capacity and develop skills to enable the Council to deliver on its priorities and ambitions;
- Ensure that effective and efficient Health, Safety and Welfare systems are in place.



# **Person Specification – Corporate Director**

## **Qualifications**

- Degree level or equivalent standard of general education;
- Relevant professional qualification.

## **Personal Attributes**

- Commitment to the achievement of value for money, service excellence and equality in employment and service delivery;
- Commitment to community involvement and participation in the development and delivery of Council strategies and services.

## **Experience**

- Consistent personal achievement as a senior manager in a large, complex organisation, covering at least one of the service areas within this Service Grouping;
- Successful participation in the corporate affairs of a large, complex organisation including a record of achievement in developing and implementing major policy initiatives;
- Proven success in developing effective working relationships with external partners, with an emphasis on multi agency working;
- Experience of success in the initiation and management of change within a large and complex organisation;
- A strong track record of effective leadership of a large and diverse workforce in at least one of the areas of service responsibility, with a record of promoting successful performance management;
- A record of successfully managing substantial budgets, with an emphasis on promoting cost efficiencies and value for money;
- Evidence of success in promoting equality and diversity both internally and with service users.

## **Skills and Knowledge**

- A thorough understanding of legislation and the statutory framework affecting the services within the Service Grouping;
- Ability to convey clear vision and manage strategically within a corporate context;

- High level analytical, presentational, communications and interpersonal skills;
- Ability to lead, motivate and develop people in an increasingly performance focused organisation;
- Ability to implement creative and imaginative approaches and identify new options for action;
- Ability to maximise resources and manage the budget effectively in a financially disciplined environment;
- Ability to anticipate, interpret and manage change and achieve results through sound judgement in seeking creative solutions to complex situations.