

Chief Officer Appointments Committee

27 January 2025

Recruitment to the Post of Corporate Director: Neighbourhoods and Climate Change



Report of John Hewitt, Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To seek approval from the Chief Officer Appointments Committee (COAC) to commence an external recruitment exercise to fill the post of Corporate Director, Neighbourhoods and Climate Change.
2. To seek approval to engage the services of Executive Recruitment Consultants (PENNA), to support the recruitment process.

Executive Summary

- 2 The current post holder of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change has confirmed his intention to retire from the role in June 2025.
- 3 COAC is asked to approve the commencement of an external recruitment process using PENNA, Executive Search and Recruitment Specialists.
- 4 The job description is attached as Appendix 2. The role reflects recent changes made at a senior level following the re-alignment of Transport and Contract Services to this Directorate.

Recommendation(s)

- 5 It is recommended that the Chief Officer Appointments Committee:
 - (a) agree to engage the services of PENNA (external recruitment consultants) to commence the external recruitment process.

Background

- 6 The current Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change has informed the Council of his intention to retire from the role in June 2025.
- 7 Recruiting to the post permanently, is considered the most appropriate approach given the scale of the services within the remit of the role which will require stable strategic leadership.
- 8 The job description for the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change is attached as Appendix 2.
- 9 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.
- 10 As with previous recruitment exercises the COAC will be afforded every opportunity to consider the candidates and to be engaged in the process.
- 11 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.
- 12 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.
- 13 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

- 14 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

- 15 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)

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Appendix 1: Implications

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

NA

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

NA

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.

Appendix 2: Job Description and Person Specification

Job Title: Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods & Climate Change

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 climate change and environment 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 and responsibilities within County Durham related to:

- Climate change strategy;
- Environment services;
- Community Protection services;
- Highways services;
- Transport and Contract services

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 very senior manager, operating at a strategic level, 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;
- Significant 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.