



NORWICH City Council

Committee name: Council

Committee date: 14/03/2023

Report title: Appointment of the Interim Chief Executive, Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer

Portfolio: Councillor Waters, Leader of the council

Report from: Head of legal and procurement

Wards: None

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to make interim arrangements for the critical roles of Chief Executive, Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer until a permanent Chief Executive is appointed

Recommendation:

It is recommended that:

- 1) As of 25 March 2023, Louise Rawsthorne is appointed as Interim Chief Executive and Interim Head of Paid Service
- 2) With immediate effect, Louise Rawsthorne is appointed as Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer
- 3) With immediate effect, the executive scheme of delegation is amended in line with the change in responsibilities as outlined in paragraph 6;
- 4) Council notes the arrangements in place for the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service, and that an extraordinary meeting of Council will be convened in due course to confirm the appointment

Policy framework

The council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.
- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.

- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

This report meets the Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city corporate priority

Report details

1. In January 2023, the Council's Chief Executive, Stephen Evans, confirmed that he would be leaving on 24 March 2023.
2. The Chief Executive plays a critical leadership role within the Council, as well as performing a range of statutory functions including acting as the Head of Paid Service with responsibility for ensuring that all the authority's functions are properly co-ordinated, organising staff and appointing appropriate management. They also act as the Returning Officer, overseeing local elections, and the Electoral Registration Officer, with responsibility for management of the electoral register.
3. This report seeks to ensure that these important roles are fulfilled on an interim basis whilst a permanent appointment is recruited to, and outlines the arrangements being put in place for that recruitment.

Interim Arrangements

4. On a temporary basis it is proposed to appoint Louise Rawsthorne, the Council's Executive Director for Communities, to the Interim Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service from 25 March. Louise joined the Council permanently in April 2021, bringing a wealth of leadership experience across local government.
5. During the period of interim arrangements, the Council will be undertaking elections, and it is important that a returning officer and electoral registration officer is appointed to oversee the effective and sound running of the election and management of the register. With the nominations due to open on 27 March, Council is being requested to transfer the returning officer and electoral registration officer functions to Louise Rawsthorne with immediate effect to ensure there is clarity on roles as we approach the pre-election period. The Electoral Registration Officer is the Acting Returning Officer in the event of Parliamentary elections or by-elections.
6. To support the Executive Director whilst acting as Interim Chief Executive, it is proposed that the functions relating to IT, Digital and Customer Services and Strategy, Engagement and Culture will transfer to the Interim Director of Transformation, whilst the Interim Head of Housing and Community Safety will lead on the housing elements of the Directorate. This report proposes that the necessary constitutional amendments to the executive scheme of delegation also come into effect immediately to allow focus on transition of the Chief Executive role. Both officers have considerable senior experience in similar roles and bring with them the necessary expertise to carry out these functions.

Appointment of a new Chief Executive

7. The Council has commissioned Gatenby Sanderson as a partner to support the recruitment of a permanent Chief Executive. At the time of producing this

report, the process and timeline are being finalised albeit it is anticipated that a special meeting of Council may need to be convened shortly before the election to confirm the appointment.

Consultation

8. Regulations require that prior to appointing the Head of Paid Service (and other senior officers), consultation must take place with the Cabinet, who have the right to raise concerns regarding the proposed appointment. This process has taken place regarding the interim arrangements and no concerns have been raised.

Implications

Financial and resources

9. Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan 2022-26 and budget.
10. The arrangements for the interim Chief Executive and consequent changes to posts in support of that are estimated to cost approximately £0.067m less over a 6 month period than the substantive structure. This arises primarily as there is no like for like backfilling of the Executive Director for Communities post which will be covered by existing resource taking on additional duties on an interim basis as set out in the report.

Legal

11. This report ensures that the Council has the necessary arrangements in place to ensure statutory posts are fulfilled whilst recruitment takes place for a permanent chief executive.
12. Appointment to the role on a permanent basis must take place in line with The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001, which are reflected in the Council's constitution.

Statutory considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and diversity	There are no specific implications arising from this report
Health, social and economic impact	There are no specific implications arising from this report
Crime and disorder	There are no specific implications arising from this report
Children and adults safeguarding	There are no specific implications arising from this report

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Environmental impact	There are no specific implications arising from this report

Risk management

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
The council fails to make adequate interim arrangements until a permanent postholder is appointed	Ineffective leadership arrangements and lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities	The proposals in this report seek to ensure that there is effective leadership arrangements in place

Other options considered

13. The Council could elect to appoint alternative officers; however, the proposals in this report have been subject to thorough consideration and have the support of the current political and senior officer leadership

Reasons for the decision/recommendation


14. This recommendation is being made to ensure the Council has effective leadership and its statutory roles are fulfilled on a temporary basis

Background papers: None

Appendices: None

Contact officer: Leah Mickleborough, Head of Legal and Procurement

Email address: leahmickleborough@norwich.gov.uk

	<p>If you would like this agenda in an alternative format, such as a larger or smaller font, audio or Braille, or in a different language, please contact the committee officer above.</p>
---	--