



# NORWICH City Council

**Committee Name: COUNCIL**

**Committee Date: 21/05/2024**

**Report Title: Appointment of a Statutory Officer (Interim Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer)**

**Portfolio: Councillor Kendrick, Cabinet member for resources**

**Report from: Chief executive**

**Wards: All Wards**

## **OPEN PUBLIC ITEM**

### **Purpose**

To consider the appointment of an interim chief finance officer and section 151 officer. The s151 officer is one of three statutory roles that the council must have in place.

### **Recommendation:**

To confirm the appointment of Alistair Rush as interim chief finance officer and section 151 officer.

### **Policy Framework**

The Council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- An open and modern council
- A prosperous Norwich
- A fairer Norwich
- A climate responsive Norwich
- A future proof Norwich.

This report meets the Norwich City Council is an open and modern council corporate priority.

## Report Details

1. Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires that every local authority shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure that one of their officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs. This officer in the case of Norwich City Council is the director of finance.
2. Section 113 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires that the officer appointed as Section 151 officer must be a member of one of the following bodies 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. The constitution states that proper officers are appointed by full Council. The chief finance officer and s151 officer is a proper officer.
4. The chief finance officer and S151 officer has been provided by an interim resource since the permanent post holder left.
5. The role of director of finance, which incorporates the roles of chief finance officer and s151 officer is currently being recruited to on a permanent basis. An interim resource is required to fulfil the role from 1 June 2024 until the recruitment is concluded and the appointed candidate commences employment.
6. This report seeks authority to appoint Alistair Rush as interim chief finance officer and s151 officer with effect from 1 June 2024 and pending the conclusion of the permanent recruitment to the role of director of finance.
7. Alistair Rush is a qualified and fellow member of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). He has substantial experience in director level and senior finance roles in local government; including county councils and a unitary council, where he previously held deputy S151 positions.
8. Alistair has held the position of interim deputy S151 for Norwich City Council since 20 November 2023.

## Consultation

9. The proposals within this report have been subject to consultation with the political groups and no objections have been received.

## Implications

### Financial and Resources

10. 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 community-led plan 2024-29 and budget.
11. The gross estimated additional cost for the s151 appointment from 1 June 2024 to 31 March 2025 is £62,764. The additional cost pressure on the salary budget for 2024/25 when taking into account all costs is estimated to be £79,194. These additional costs can be met from the general fund contingency allocation. As with all corporate services, a proportion of the costs will be recharged to the housing revenue account at the year-end.

### Legal

12. Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires local authorities to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and appoint a Chief Finance Officer, known as the S151 officer, to have responsibility for those arrangements.
13. Section 113 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires that the officer appointed as the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) must be a member of a specified accountancy body.

### Statutory Considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and diversity	n/a
Health, social and economic impact	n/a
Crime and disorder	n/a
Children and adults safeguarding	n/a
Environmental impact	n/a

### Risk Management

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
Appointment of CFO/S151 is not agreed.	Norwich City Council will not be compliant with the statutory requirement to have a suitably qualified S151 officer.	Appoint a suitably qualified CFO/S151 officer.

## Other Options Considered

12. No other options have been considered with regards to this appointment. An alternative option would be to go out to the market to seek a suitably qualified interim appointment. This would result in delays in an appointment being made.

## Reason for the Decision and Recommendation

14. It is a statutory requirement for the Council to have a chief finance officer and S151 officer.

**Background papers:** None

**Appendices:**

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