

COUNTY COUNCIL

22nd February 2023

Appointment of the Preferred Candidate for the Position of Executive Director of Transformation & Resources and S151 Officer

Report of the Leader of the Council

Purpose of the Report

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001, matters relating to the appointment of a Section 151 Officer are reserved to the Full Council.

The purpose of this report is to consider the recommendation of the Staff and Appointments Committee held on 30th January 2023 to appoint Jan Willis to the role of Executive Director – Transformation & Resources and Section 151 Officer (S151). Please see published report at northumberland.moderngov.co.uk

Recommendations

It is recommended that Full Council:

1. approve the recommendations from the Staff and Appointments Committee which was held on 30th January 2023 to permanently appoint Jan Willis to the role of Executive Director – Transformation & Resources and Section 151 Officer.
2. note that the Staff and Appointments Committee has agreed that the remuneration for the post of Executive Director – Transformation & Resources and Section 151 Officer will be at £162,285 per annum with access to staff benefits in line with all Council employees.
3. note the appointment will be subject to the Council's standard pre-employment checks.

Links to the Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to all areas of the Corporate Plan as it relates to ensuring that the Council is compliant with the constitution and fulfilling its legal duties and requirements to ensure that there is an effective and fit for purpose staffing establishment.

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 S151 Officer, to have responsibility for those arrangements.

As such, the S151 must lead on a local authority's financial functions and ensure they are fit for purpose. A S151 officer must be professionally qualified and suitably experienced. In correspondence with the Local Government Finance Act 1988 the S151 must be a member of one of the following bodies in order 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.

Jan Willis is a member of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)

Key Issues

1. Following the resignation of the Executive Director of Finance (S151 Officer) in February 2021, the Council has engaged Jan Willis on an interim basis to act as S151 Officer.
2. On 15th December 2022, Staff and Appointments Committee agreed the appointment process for the recruitment of a permanent team of Executive Directors including a permanent S151 Officer. The report contained a S151 job description, the salary range, recruitment process and selection methodology.
3. On 27th January 2023, a selection process took place that identified the preferred candidate as Jan Willis. This conclusion was reached following a comprehensive recruitment process and assessment of her extensive experience. The assessment centre outcome concluded that Jan Willis has the requisite skills to successfully undertake the role of Executive Director – Transformation & Resources and Section 151 Officer.

4. Jan Willis has been informed that she is the preferred candidate and has indicated she would accept the appointment, should a formal offer of appointment be made subject to the recommendations of Staff and Appointments Committee and subsequent full Council's approval.
5. Staff and Appointments Committee considered the preferred candidate on 30th January 2023 and resolved subject to there being no objection from the Leader or Cabinet to the appointment, to recommend to full Council that Jan Willis be appointed as the Executive Director – Transformation & Resources and Section 151 Officer.
6. The Staff and Appointments Committee also agreed that the remuneration for the post of Executive Director – Transformation & Resources and Section 151 Officer will be £162,285 per annum with access to staff benefits in line with all Council employees.
7. Note the appointment will be subject to the Council's standard pre-employment checks. The commencement date is yet to be confirmed and will be agreed in the usual manner between Jan Willis and the Chief Executive.
8. The Officer Appointment Rules have been followed as per the Constitution of the Council. Under the Constitution the proper officer designated for this purpose was the previous interim Head of Paid Service (Rick O'Farrell) and I can confirm that no objections to the appointment were received.

Implications:

Policy	Oversight of HR Policies and Procedure
Finance and value for money	A permanent appointment is deemed to be appropriate in relation to finance and value for money and it is a statutory requirement that the Council has a S151 Officer in situ. The cost of the appointment will be met from the Council's revenue budget.
Legal	<p>Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 states 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".</p> <p>The Officer designated by the Council as having the statutory responsibility set out in Section 151 of the 1972 Act shall be the Executive Director – Transformation & Resources.</p> <p>Full Council has reserved the function to designate the appointment of the S.151 Officer.</p>
Procurement	Agreed via the procurement process to commission Penna PLC to support the recruitment and assessment process.
Human Resources	The appointment has been made in line with the appropriate employment recruitment processes. Relevant legal implications have been set out in the body of this report.
Property	N/A
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The recruitment for this process has been in line with best practice in relation to promoting equality and diversity within the Council's recruitment processes.
Risk Assessment	Consistent with the Independent Corporate Governance Review (Caller Report)
Crime & Disorder	There are no crime and disorder implications within this report.
Customer Consideration	There are no specific customer consideration implications within this report.

Carbon reduction	There are no carbon reduction implications within this report.
Health and Wellbeing	The recommendations will support the health and wellbeing of Council Employees at varying levels within the organisation
Wards	The recommendations do not relate to any particular ward but cover the whole of Northumberland.

Background information

N/A

Linked Reports.

20th September 2022 Staff and Appointments Committee report prepared by the Interim Director of HR/OD - providing further details of the proposed recruitment process.

30th January 2023 Staff and Appointments Committee report prepared by the Interim Director of HR/OD - providing details of preferred candidates.

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer / Interim Director of Governance	Suki Binjal
Service Director Finance and Deputy S151 Officer	Alison Elsdon
Chief Executive	Helen Paterson
Portfolio Holder(s)	Staff & Appointments Committee

Authors and Contact Details

Helen Paterson – Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

Sarah Farrell – Interim Service Director HR/OD