



ADUR & WORTHING COUNCILS

Joint Senior Staff Committee
21 June 2023

Ward(s) Affected: All

Recruitment process for the Chief Financial Officer (Assistant Director for Finance and Section 151 Officer)

Report by the Head of Paid Service

Officer Contact Details:-

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Chief Executive

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Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The Assistant Director for Finance & Chief Financial Officer for Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils is due to retire. The Chief Financial Officer is one of three statutory roles required by the Councils and the terms of reference for the Joint Senior Staff Committee require the appointment process to be approved by the Committee prior to a referral to Full Council.
- 1.2. The purpose of this report is to obtain the Joint Senior Staff Committee's approval to the proposed recruitment process at Paragraph 4 below and the terms and conditions upon which it is proposed the Statutory Chief Officer role of s151 Chief Financial Officer is appointed.
- 1.3. It is anticipated that the Chief Financial Officer will retire in August, with a date to be confirmed.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the Joint Senior Staff Committee approves the recruitment of the Section 151 Chief Financial Officer for Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils on the terms set out in this report.
- 2.2. Where the recruitment process is incomplete at the date of retirement and as an alternative option to paragraph 3.3 below, delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer in consultation with the Leaders and the Joint Chairs of the Committee to recommend to Full Council the appointment of an Interim Chief Financial Officer on substantially same terms and conditions as set out in this Report.

3. Introduction

- 3.1. After an exemplary career, Sarah Gobey is retiring from the post of Assistant Director for Finance & Section 151 Finance Officer (Chief Financial Officer) and the Councils therefore need to appoint a new Chief Financial Officer.
- 3.2. The Councils are required by law (Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972) to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and appoint a Chief Financial Officer to have responsibility for those arrangements. The Chief Financial Officer must be a member of a specified accountancy body (Section 113 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988).
- 3.3. The Chief Financial Officer also has a duty to designate a Deputy Finance Officer who is suitably qualified to act as the Chief Financial Officer in situations where the Chief Officer is absent. There is already one suitably qualified and experienced Deputy Financial Officer. To secure additional resilience in service delivery, the current Chief Financial Officer intends to appoint a second Deputy in the event one of them is required to act as the Chief Financial Officer in the interim period between the retirement date and the replacement date. The appointment of a second deputy will ensure continuity and resilience in the finance team.

- 3.4. The Chief Financial Officer role has several statutory duties which includes reporting to members (in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and Head of Paid Service) if there is, or there is likely to be, unlawful expenditure or an unbalanced budget (Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988). The Chief Financial Officer and the Monitoring Officer have a role in advising Councillors whether particular decisions are likely to be contrary to the policy framework or budget of the authority.
- 3.5. The Chief Financial Officer is also required to report to the authority at the time that the budget is considered and the Council Tax set on both the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of financial reserves. They are also required to ensure that the guidelines and ratios set down for the purposes of Prudential Capital regime are adhered to once fixed and report to Council if they are going to be infringed (Local Government Act 2003).
- 3.6. Councillors will be aware that a reshaping of the senior staff team has been undertaken. The reshaping follows and is part of the broader strategy work set out in Our Plan, aimed at delivering the changes required to create an organisation that is resilient, adaptable, and participative, and therefore better able to change and continuously improve service delivery with and for our residents. The recruitment exercise to appoint the new Chief Financial Officer (referred to as the Assistant Director Finance in the new structure) is taking place as part of this reshaping exercise.
- 3.7. Osbourne Thomas (Recruitment Consultants) have been selected to assist the Council in the recruitment of the Chief Financial Officer. The support from Osbourne Thomas will be vital to ensure the Councils receive a good calibre of applicants for this critical post.
- 3.8. Other than requiring regular attendance at the Councils' Corporate Leadership Team, the terms and conditions, Job Specification and Person Specification for the appointment of the Chief Financial Officer role have not changed since they were previously approved by the Joint Senior Staff Committee. The terms additionally include the Assistant Director for Finance role and the combined Job Description and Person Specification is attached to this report for your review.
- 3.9. For background information to the Committee, Osbourne Thomas is also assisting the Councils with the appointment of 5 Deputy Chief

Officer posts being recruited to, as a result of the re-shaping of the leadership team. Under the Constitutions the appointor to these posts is the Chief Executive Officer following a Member consultation process which is set out at paragraph 3.2.2 of the Councils' Officer Employment Procedure Rules. These roles include:-

- Assistant Director Housing, Homelessness and Prevention
- Assistant Director for People and Change
- Assistant Director for Regenerative Development
- Head of Technology and Design
- Head of Citizen Services

4. Chief Financial Officer Recruitment time table and process

- 4.1. The Job Description for the position of Chief Financial Officer (Assistant Director for Finance and Section 151 Officer) is attached.
- 4.2. The recruitment process for the Chief Financial Officer contains a number of steps, as shown in the table below:

Activity	Timeframe
Application opened with executive search activities to find suitable candidates	c/c 1 June
Longlisting interviews	w/c 10 July
Short list interviews	w/c 17 July
Final interview at Joint Senior Staff Committee	w/c 24 July TBC
Recommendation to both Adur and Worthing Full Councils	July / August TBC

- 4.3. The Joint Senior Staff Committee is asked to note this timetable and agree the date and approach they would like to undertake for the final interviews. Support and guidance will be given to members, as required, to undertake this final selection process.
- 4.4. As to the interview procedure, it is proposed that this is a staged process, starting with the Chief Executive Officer interviewing the candidates with the Director for Sustainability & Resources and the Chief Financial Officer from another council. Following this there will be

a second stage interview process undertaken by Chief Executive Officer and the Leaders of each Council to approve the final shortlisted candidates for referral to the Joint Senior Staff Committee for interview, with a view to sourcing one suitable candidate that the Committee can recommend to Full Councils for appointment.

- 4.5. It is acknowledged that the recruitment process may not conclude with a permanent candidate prior to Ms Gobey's retirement. In that instance it is requested that the Committee delegates authority as set out in the Recommendations as Paragraph 2.2 to the Chief Executive Officer to refer to Full Councils for approval, the appointment of an interim Chief Financial officer in consultation with the Joint Chairs of the Joint Senior Staff Committee.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The terms and conditions of the Chief Finance Officer Post have not been altered through the job evaluation process (Grade 13: £77,377 - £84,133).
- 5.2. The recruitment of the Chief Financial Officer will cost in the region of £11,500 which will be funded from the Councils' contingency budgets. Savings have been obtained by undertaking the search and recruitment of all 6 senior posts at the same time.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1. The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for the purposes of Section 151 Local Government Act 1972; Section 73 Local Government Act 1985 and Section 112 Local Government Act 1988 for monitoring the Council's financial affairs.
- 6.2. The Joint Senior Staff Committee is responsible for the appointment of the Chief Finance Officer as set out in The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) regulations 2015.
- 6.3. The terms of reference for the Joint Senior Staff Committee are set out in the Constitution which confirm 'the Committee is responsible for the recruitment and terms and conditions of the Chief Financial Officer and may make recommendations on any proposed appointment, and terms and conditions, to both Adur and Worthing Full Councils'.

Background Papers

[Chief Financial Officer \(Assistant Director of Finance\) Job Description](#)

Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1. Economic

- 1.1. The post of the Chief Operating Officer is key to delivering on the ambitious agenda set out by both councils in Our Plan in relation to the economy.

2. Social

- 2.1. The post of the Chief Finance Officer is key to delivering on the ambitious agenda set out by both councils in Our Plan in relation to communities.

2.2. Equality Issues

- 2.2.1. Recruitment will be undertaken with close attention to matters of diversity & inclusion, Osbourne Thoamas have particular expertise and success in this area.

2.3. Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

- 2.3.1. Matter considered and no issues identified

2.4. Human Rights Issues

- 2.4.1. Matter considered and no issues identified

3. Environmental

- 3.1. The post of the Chief Operating Officer is key to delivering on the ambitious agenda set out by both councils in Our Plan in relation to sustainability and the environment.

4. Governance

- 4.1. The post of Section 151 Officer is currently held by Sarah Gobey, in the event that the recruitment process is not completed prior to Ms Gobey's departure, further permission to appoint an Interim S151 Officer will be sought from Members.