

Report of Head of HR, IT & Technical Services

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To: Council (South)

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To: Council (Vale)

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Appointment of chief executive

Recommendation(s)

Both councils are recommended:

- (a) to consider the recommendations of the Joint Staff Committee and, provided that both councils agree to the appointment, to appoint a shared chief executive of South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council on the terms and conditions agreed by the Joint Staff Committee

Subject to each council agreeing the appointment of the shared chief executive:

- (b) to agree that the chief executive will be employed by South Oxfordshire District Council and placed at the disposal of Vale of White Horse District Council in accordance with the existing agreement between the two councils under section 113 of the Local Government Act 1972
- (c) to appoint the chief executive as each council's head of paid service with effect from the commencement of his or her employment
- (d) to authorise the head of HR, IT & technical services to finalise the terms and conditions of the contract of employment of the chief executive in accordance with the recommendations of the Joint Staff Committee
- (e) to authorise the head of HR, IT & technical services to make any necessary amendments to the councils' published pay policy statement arising from the agreed terms and conditions of appointment of the chief executive.

Purpose of Report

1. This report invites each council to agree the appointment of a chief executive and head of paid service, in succession to David Buckle.
2. The report has been written in advance of the meeting of the Joint Staff Committee (JSC) which will conduct formal interviews and make recommendations to each council on the appointment. The recommendations of the Joint Staff Committee will be presented to each council meeting.

Background

3. David Buckle, the current chief executive, announced his retirement earlier this year. The Joint Staff Committee met formally on 19 February and agreed a process for recruiting his replacement. David has agreed to a flexible departure date in order to fit in with the recruitment timetable and the arrival of his successor.

Appointment process

4. Members of the Joint Staff Committee met informally on 7 March, interviewing a number of recruitment consultants and appointing Penna to act for the councils. The job description was agreed by email and the post was advertised from 24 March both online and in the printed media (the MJ and the Guardian), with a closing date of 13 April.
5. In parallel with the advertising, Penna made direct approaches to a number of potential candidates. 25 applications were received and, in a meeting between Penna and the council leaders, eight candidates were long-listed.
6. Preliminary interviews were held on 25 and 26 April with the council leaders, Penna, and Trevor Holden, chief executive of Luton Borough Council. Following these preliminary interviews, four candidates were short-listed for final assessment on 10 May.
7. At the time of writing this report, the final assessment process has not yet taken place. Before 10 May, Penna will be conducting some psychometric assessments and taking up references for the short-listed candidates.
8. The Joint Staff Committee will meet formally on 10 May and will make its recommendations based on the outcome of the final assessment day. As required by both councils' officer employment procedure rules, all members of both cabinets will be informed of the recommendations and given an opportunity to raise any objections. If there are no material or well-founded objections by cabinet members to the proposed appointment the recommendations from the Joint Staff Committee will be presented to the council meeting on the night.

Employing council and head of paid service

9. The Section 151 Officer recommends that South Oxfordshire District Council should be the employer in accordance with our existing practice for new members of staff. The services of the chief executive will be placed at the disposal of Vale of White Horse District Council in line with our current practice and with the existing Section 113 agreement between the two councils.

10. Each council is recommended to designate the incoming chief executive as its head of paid service for the purposes of Section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Electoral registration and returning officer

11. An early task for the new chief executive will be to develop and implement a revised flatter management structure for the two councils. The chief executive is not expected to take the roles of electoral registration and returning officer: a report and recommendations regarding these roles will be brought forward to a future meeting of each council.

Financial Implications

12. The appointment of a new chief executive, replacing David Buckle, brings very little by way of any financial implication. The recommendations from the Joint Staff Committee will include a proposed salary for the new chief executive, and this is not expected to differ greatly from the current position.
13. If the salary to be offered is not the same as that paid to the current chief executive, it will be necessary for the councils to amend their published pay policy statement.

Legal Implications

14. The legal implications of the proposed appointment are covered in the body of the report.

Conclusion

15. Each council is asked to agree the appointment of a chief executive to be employed by South Oxfordshire District Council, to designate him or her as its head of paid service, and to authorise the head of HR, IT & technical services to complete the necessary formalities.