

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF HR AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

TO:	PERSONNEL COMMITTEE		
DATE:	16 JUNE 2022		
TITLE:	PROCESS FOR APPOINTING A NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS		
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report details the process that will be followed to appoint a new Chief Executive following the announcement that Peter Sloman will retire on 31 August 2022. It also confirms the interim arrangements that will be put in place until a new Chief Executive joins the Council.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 It is recommended that Personnel Committee:

- 2.1.1 Notes the selection process and indicative timetable for appointing a new Chief Executive.
- 2.1.2 Gives delegated authority to the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chair of Personnel Committee, to appoint an executive search company to support the appointment of a new Chief Executive.
- 2.1.3 Notes that Jackie Yates (currently the Deputy Chief Executive and Deputy Head of Paid Service) will be the Interim Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service from 19 July 2022 until a new Chief Executive takes up the role.
- 2.1.4 Gives delegated authority to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chair of Personnel Committee, to appoint an Interim Executive Director of Resources.

3. THE APPOINTMENT PROCESS

- 3.1 Our current Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service, Peter Sloman, retires on 31 August 2022. Peter works term time only and therefore his last working day will be 18 July 2022.
- 3.2 The appointment of a new Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service will be co-ordinated and made by the Personnel Committee, in accordance with the Council’s Constitution (Officer Employment Procedure Rules). The Constitution also confirms that the appointment of an officer designated as the Head of the Paid Service shall be approved by the full Council before any offer of appointment is given to the person concerned.
- 3.3 The post will be advertised publicly, both internally and externally, to bring it to the attention of people who are qualified to apply for it. A job description and person specification will be produced, and sent to all applicants for the job, specifying the duties of the post and the qualifications and qualities being sought by the Council. The Personnel Committee Appointments Panel will select a short-list of qualified applicants in accordance with the Council’s recruitment and selection policy and procedures and candidates will then be interviewed.
- 3.4 For such an important role as the Chief Executive, it is usual practice for the Personnel Committee Appointments Panel to seek support for the selection process from an executive search company with an understanding of the senior recruitment market, as well as a comprehensive contextual understanding of the opportunities and challenges local authorities face. The executive search partner will liaise closely with the Council’s Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development, who will also support the Appointments Panel throughout the process and ensure that the Council’s recruitment and selection policies are adhered to and that best practice is observed.
- 3.5 Proposals have been sought from three executive search companies to support the appointment of a new Chief Executive and these have been shared with the Leader of the Council and the Lead Member for Corporate Services and Resources. In addition to detailing their experience of recruiting similar roles, we have specifically asked providers to confirm how they will attract a diverse range of candidates to apply. Delegated authority is sought through this report for the Assistant Director of HR and Organisational Development, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chair of Personnel Committee, to select and appoint the executive search company.
- 3.6 Once the executive search company has been appointed, the timetable for the appointment process will be agreed. We will need to be mindful that candidate and member availability may become problematic as we head toward August, where the pent-up demand for holidays from the last two years of pandemic are likely to be felt. An illustrative timetable showing weeks rather than specific dates is included below.

Week commencing	Search Partner Activity	Council Activity
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing • Advertising strategy agreed • Agree project plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing • Advertising strategy agreed • Agree project plan
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adverts drafted • Microsite designed • Search mapping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign off adverts • Sign off microsite
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsite launched • Adverts appear • Executive search 	
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive search 	
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive search 	

Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive search 	
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing date • Evaluation of applications • Electronic applications and Long-List Report to client 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute Long-List Report to the Appointments Panel
Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Long-List meeting • Invite candidates to interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Long-List meeting with the Appointments Panel
Week 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Technical Interviews • Electronic Short-List Report to client 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute Short-List Report to the Appointments Panel
Week 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Short-List Meeting • References • Online assessment testing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Short-List Meeting with the Appointments Panel
Week 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Assessment Centre • Review of candidate performance • Final Interviews (in person) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of candidate performance • Final Interviews with the Appointments Panel (in person)

3.7 The technical interviews at long list stage (week 9) would normally involve the lead consultant from the executive search company and a special adviser/technical assessor (e.g. a former or current local authority Chief Executive). The process will comprise an extended interview, focusing mainly on candidates' detailed experience and achievements, specialist skills and knowledge, management and leadership styles, self-awareness and understanding of the job and the Council's requirements.

3.8 The virtual assessment centre (week 11) would usually include a combination of management exercises, psychometric assessments, partner and stakeholder events and appropriate one-to-one discussions to complement the information gained from more traditional interviews and presentations. This is a good opportunity to involve a wider group of stakeholders in the appointment process including elected members, partners, trade unions and staff. The decision as to which elements to include in the assessment centre will be discussed and agreed with the Appointment Panel.

3.9 Whilst many elements of the appointment process can be conducted virtually, which is beneficial for candidates and others involved in the process because of reduced travel costs and time, the final interviews with the Personnel Committee Appointments Panel would be held in person.

4. INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Whilst the appointment process for a new Chief Executive is underway, the Deputy Chief Executive, Jackie Yates, will act up as Interim Chief Executive. Under Article 12 of the Constitution, the Deputy Chief Executive is already designated as Deputy Head of Paid Service and performs all the duties and responsibilities of the Head of Paid Service when they are not available. This will commence from 19 July 2022 (i.e. the day after the Chief Executive's last working day).

- 4.2 In order to provide backfill for Jackie Yates, an Interim Executive Director of Resources will be appointed, to lead and manage the Council's Resources functions which include Finance, Customer Services and Corporate Improvement, HR and Organisational Development, IT and Digital, Legal and Democratic Services, and Procurements and Contracts. The post will be advertised internally and simultaneously to the external interim market. Delegated authority is sought through this report for the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Chair of Personnel Committee, to appoint an Interim Executive Director of Resources. The interim will commence as close as possible to 19 July 2022.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 This report seeks to ensure that arrangements are in place for the effective management of the Council's workforce. High performing, motivated and healthy staff are crucial to achieving the Council's vision to help Reading realise its potential and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 Not required for this report.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 Not required for this report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The legal basis for the Head of Paid Service position is covered in Section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There will be a fee for the executive search company support in addition to advertising costs which are charged separately. The executive search company fees are generally spread over three instalments with a percentage due at each stage: on commission, at short-list stage and on successful appointment. The final proportion is only payable if an offer is made.

- 10.2 Based on previous recruitments, the total costs are likely to be appropriately £20,000 and will be met from existing salary budgets.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Constitution of the Council.