

Report to:	CHIEF OFFICER EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Neil Jack, Chief Executive
Relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor Williams, Leader of the Council
Date of Meeting	26 January 2021

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 The Committee will be asked to consider its involvement in making an appointment to the position of Director of Children's Services. Mrs. Diane Booth has made the decision to retire and leaves the Authority at the end of March 2021. The process for advertising for a replacement has started and a two day assessment process will take place early March 2021. The process will involve various stakeholders including partners and Elected Members. The Committee is asked to consider Member representatives for the assessment process who will be asked to consider putting through a candidate(s) for final interview by the Committee.
- 1.2 Members are reminded that when the committee is ready to make an appointment in accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Chief Officer responsible for Human Resources or their nominated representative is required to notify all members of the Executive of:
- the name of the person to whom the Committee wishes to make the offer
 - any other particulars relevant to the appointment which the Committee has notified
 - the period within which any objection to the making of the offer is to be made by the Executive Leader on behalf of the Executive to the Chief Officer for Human Resources.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To confirm Member representatives for the assessment process who will be asked to consider putting through a candidate/s for final interview by the Committee. It is proposed the Member representatives are cross party and include the Leader, Deputy Leader, a Conservative Member and Cllr Mrs. Callow.
- 2.2 The Committee will be requested to interview the short listed applicant/s for the post of Director of Children's Services and determine whether to make an offer of appointment.
- 2.3 To recommend Council to appoint the current Assistant Director of Children's Services to be the interim statutory Director of Children's Services in accordance with Section 18 of

the Children's Act 2004 and delegate to the Chief Executive the authority to assign that responsibility to the successful candidate for the permanent position should they commence employment with the Council in between ordinary Council meetings.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To appoint a Director of Children's Services in accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None, the Director of Children's Services is a statutory position. This designation could be assigned to another current council officer but it is considered that this is such an important position that it should be filled by competitive advertisement.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council priority is Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

5.0 Background Information

5.1 The Director of Children's Services (DCS) role has been advertised externally in Municipal Journal, The Guardian, Community Care and Children and Young People Now. Taking into account the likely duration of the recruitment process and notice period of any successful candidate, a Transition Plan has been developed and approved to ensure the Council's improvement plan will continue at pace and without disruption. The Transition Plan can be found at Appendix 5(a) and has been shared with Alastair Gibbons the Council's Department for Education (DfE) appointed Improvement Advisor.

5.2 It is important that during the assessment process the Council can assess candidate's management style, beliefs and attitudes to ensure a good fit with our restorative approach and Blackpool Families Rock principles. Ensuring the Council recruit a DCS with a good cultural fit will not only lead to more effective relationships it is also likely to result in greater commitment, job satisfaction and improved retention and stability.

- 5.3 The assessment process will include the following elements:
- Interview with Leader and Chief Executive which will include behavioural questions designed to measure cultural fit.
 - Interview with Improvement Advisor and Chair of Getting to Good Board to assess experience, resilience, leadership style, skills, knowledge.
 - Panel interview with Partners designed to test knowledge and collaborative approach/style to improving outcomes.
 - Children and Young Peoples panel interview.
 - Presentation entitled: How will you lead Blackpool Families Rock to achieve sustainable improvement for children, young people and their families and financial stability for the Council? Following the presentation there will be an opportunity for questions.
 - Test to assess financial acumen including financial budgeting and modelling which will be set by Director of Resources
- 5.4 The Members Panel, referred to earlier in the report will help to consider the feedback from the stakeholder groups and also listen to the presentation and have the opportunity to ask questions. Following this, the Panel will be requested to put through a preferred candidate/s to the Committee for final interview. Members of the Panel will update the Committee on this process prior to the final interview.
- 5.5 Due to Mrs Booth's retirement date and the possible start date of a future candidate, there will be an interim period where a Statutory Director of Children's Services will need to be appointed. The statutory guidance for the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services, published by the Department of Education indicates that the Chief Executive can make an interim designation in such circumstances, where the Council is actively taking steps to fill a vacant post and there is no meeting of Council scheduled.
- 5.6 The Committee is therefore asked to recommend Council to appoint the current Assistant Director of Children's Services as interim statutory Director. She currently acts up in the absence of the Director of Children's Services and has the relevant knowledge and skills to undertake the interim role. This is supported by the Council's current Director of Children's Services and Department for Education (DfE) appointed improvement adviser.
- 5.7 Following this, and should the successful candidate for the permanent position commence work in between ordinary Council meetings then the Committee is also asked to recommend Council that the Chief Executive be authorised to designate that individual as an interim statutory Director of Children's Services in accordance with Section 18 of the Children's Act 2004. A report would then be brought to the next available ordinary Council meeting to confirm a permanent assignment of the statutory role.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

List of Appendices

Appendix 5(a) – Transition plan.

6.0 Legal considerations:

- 6.1 The Council is to have in place a number of statutory officer positions including a Statutory Director of Children’s Services (under the Children’s Act 2004)
- 6.2 The Director of Children’s Services is responsible for the performance of Local Authority functions relating to the education and social care of children and young people. The Director is also held to account for the effective working of Children’s Safeguarding Board by the Chief Executive and challenged where appropriate by the designated Lead Member.
- 6.3 Under the Council’s Pay Policy Statement any position with a remuneration of over £100,000 needs Council ratification, this post was given such approval at the November 2015 Council meeting.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

- 7.1 The recruitment for this post will be undertaken in accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules.

8.0 Equalities considerations:

- 8.1 This appointment will be undertaken in accordance with Council Policies and Procedures, which meet all equalities matters.

9.0 Financial considerations:

- 9.1 The remuneration for this post is already within the agreed General Revenue budget.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

- 10.1 The lack of a Director of Children’s Services in post is a concern in particular when dealing with Children’s Social care issues. That is why when the retirement of Mrs Booth was submitted, recruitment was commenced as soon as possible. There will however, be an interim period where a Statutory Director of Children’s Services will need to be appointed. There will be a report on the full Council meeting on 10 February 2021 regarding interim arrangements for this.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 The Council's values of 'accountability' and 'delivering quality services' are key in regard to ensuring that the top level of the officer core is fit for purpose and accountable for their actions, in particular those with statutory responsibilities.

12.0 Internal/External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 Due to the partnership nature of the work of this post, a range of Stakeholders will be involved in the assessment process

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.