

Hambleton District Council

Report To: Cabinet

Date: 6 July 2021

Subject: **Management Team Restructure – Section 151 Officer Arrangements**

Portfolio Holder: Leader of the Council
Councillor M Robson

Wards Affected: All Wards

1.0 Purpose and Background

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the proposed arrangements and appointment of an interim Section 151 Officer/Chief Finance Officer.
- 1.2 The Council is legally required to appoint three “statutory officers”. These are the Head of Paid Service (the Council’s Chief Executive), the Monitoring Officer (currently the Director of Law and Governance) and the Section 151 Officer/Chief Finance Officer (the Director of Finance and Commercial). The Section 151 Officer is responsible, amongst other things, for the proper administration of the Council’s financial affairs and is required to be a suitably qualified and experienced individual holding a recognised professional accountancy qualification.
- 1.3 The Council’s current Section 151 Officer will be leaving the organisation in August 2021 to take up other employment. Due to the uncertainties surrounding Local Government Reorganisation (and its likely impact at this time on the ability to recruit a suitable permanent officer to this post), it is considered the best value approach to propose the interim measure to recruit an external Section 151 Officer via a recruitment agency. This will allow the Council to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced person before the current officer leaves and provide flexibility should alternative arrangements be necessary in the future.
- 1.4 It is proposed that the appointee will work 3 days per week for a period of up to 12 months and be responsible for the core Section 151/Chief Finance Officer functions. The preference will be for the appointee to attend the Council’s Civic Centre office for three full days, as this will make the best use of the allotted time. However, it may be that there is occasionally a requirement to be on site for more than 3 days a week as need arises.
- 1.5 A shortlist of prospective candidates is being considered so it is not possible at this stage to identify the individual who may be appointed. The name of the proposed individual will however be available for the July meeting of Council, which has ultimate responsibility for the appointment of the named Section 151 Officer. For the purposes of this report Cabinet is asked to approve the principle (and to recommend to Full Council) that the Council appoints an interim external officer through a recruitment agency.

1.6 The appointment will be kept under constant review and may be subject to change if deemed necessary. This will ensure that the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs continues under this temporary arrangement.

2.0 Link to Council Priorities

2.1 Sound financial management is a key thread which runs through all the Council's priorities.

3.0 Risk Assessment

3.1 There are no significant risks associated with this report.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 The costs of the appointment will be in the region of £156,000 for the 12-month period. This equates to a daily rate of approximately £1,000 per day. This cost can be met from existing budgets.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 It is a legal requirement that the Council designates one of its officers as its Section 151/Chief Finance Officer who shall have responsibility for overseeing the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs (section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972). That officer need not be an employee of the Council and so the function can be discharged by an external appointee.

6.0 Equality/Diversity Issues

6.1 Equality and Diversity Issues have been considered and there are no issues associated with this report.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 That Cabinet approves and recommends to Council that: -

- (1) the Council appoints through a recruitment agency an external named interim Section 151 Officer/Chief Finance Officer for a period of up to 12 months commencing in July 2021; and
- (2) the Council delegates to the Chief Executive the authority to agree the final terms of the appointment.

Dr Justin Ives
Chief Executive

Background papers: None
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