

## **Minutes of the meeting of Employment panel held as Online meeting only on Tuesday 27 October 2020 at 2.30 pm**

**Present:** Councillor David Hitchiner (chairperson)  
Councillor Ellie Chowns (vice-chairperson)

**Councillors:** Tony Johnson, Liz Harvey and Terry James

**Officers:** Assistant director, people

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies.

### **2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)**

There were no named substitutes.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4. MINUTES**

**It was resolved that:**

**The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2020 be approved.**

### **5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions from members of the public.

### **6. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

There were no questions from councillors.

### **7. CHIEF EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT**

The assistant director for people introduced the report and highlighted that:

- The current chief executive was retiring in the New Year;
- It was recommended that the post be replaced on a like for like basis, although there were alternative models that the panel could consider;
- The proposed timetable depended on a number of factors including whether the recruitment agency could meet the deadlines;
- A benchmarking exercise had been carried out on the proposed salary and this showed that the salary was in the lower quartile compared with other councils and the relative size of Herefordshire council in terms of headcount and budget was also in the lower quartile;
- The role profile was bespoke for Herefordshire Council but would not include the detailed plans of any administration, these would be set in the objectives for the chief executive and agreed in consultation with group leaders.

The panel discussed the potential alternative models of leadership and noted that:

- There were benefits to having one person with strategic oversight of the council and this offered continuity in management style;
- The council needed to be mindful of the challenging current circumstances and financial constraints;
- No successful alternative models had been found, confidential feedback from councils who had explored alternative models highlighted difficulties when relationships broke down and advised that these models generally only worked on a temporary basis;
- Changing to alternative models of leadership would carry risk;
- The council should be open to job share arrangements, although there could be some difficulties in managing this.

The panel then discussed the proposed timetable and general arrangements for the recruitment process. It was noted that:

- Recruitment agencies may resist holding the selection process so early in the New Year but the assistant director was confident this was achievable;
- A recruitment agency would be able to target individuals based on what the council was looking for and encourage applications from those not actively looking for a change at the current time;
- The cost of using an agency represented a small proportion of the salary that would be paid over the next several years and was a worthwhile investment to get the right person;
- The leader of the council would consult on what the council should be looking for and then he and the assistant director would brief the recruitment agency;
- There would be opportunities to involve stakeholders and wider input from councillors at the interview stage.

The panel reviewed the proposed role profile. The following points were noted:

- The proposed profile was similar to that of the previous chief executive and in the same format used for all senior roles at the council;
- It was suggested that the items in the profile be numbered or marked in some other way to allow ease of reference;
- The mechanisms by which elements would be assessed would be set out as part of the candidate packs;
- The functions could be grouped into themed areas to give a more logical structure and to emphasise key points;
- Candidates did not necessarily need to have commercial experience but needed to be able to talk confidently to the business community and with senior members of staff;
- Part of the brief for the recruitment agency would be to make sure that there was a strategy to encourage applications from under represented groups;
- Herefordshire Council was a disability confident employer and would guarantee an interview to applicants with a disability who met the essential criteria.

The panel considered the proposed salary for the post. Panel members supported retaining the current salary and noted that:

- The successful applicant should be committed to the county and to working with the community, salary should not be the main driver;
- The salary was appropriate considering the size of the council and comparison with equivalent councils;
- The council would be open minded to appointing a first time chief executive;
- The current salary ratio in the council was 1 to 8.68 which compared favourably with neighbouring councils;

- Reducing the salary offered would reduce the already rather small differential with the salaries of the directors and it was already in the lower quartile of comparable councils.

**It was agreed that:**

- (a) Recruitment for the post of chief executive is initiated in line with the estimated timescales set out in paragraph 5 of the report;**
- (b) The Employment panel approve the role profile in appendix A, with authority delegated to the assistant director, people to finalise the presentation in consultation with the leader of the council;**
- (c) The Employment panel endorses the recruitment plan and delegates long listing to the Assistant Director, People; and**
- (d) The Employment panel, having considered the remuneration for the post of chief executive, does not wish to make any changes to the salary package.**

The meeting ended at 3.44 pm

**Chairperson**

