



Title of report: Recruitment of the Director of Finance

Meeting: Employment Panel

Meeting date: Wednesday 25 March 2026

Report by: Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

All wards

Purpose

To initiate the recruitment process for the post of Director of Finance.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **Recruitment for the post of Director of Finance is initiated in line with the estimated timescales set out in the report.**
- b) **Employment Panel considers the salary benchmarking information for the post of Director of Finance and determines whether to recommend any changes to full council.**

Alternative options

1. Employment Panel might decide not to recruit to the post of Director of Finance at this time and instead ask the Chief Executive to make an interim appointment for the next budget year. The advantage of this alternative option is that it gives some continuity for the entirety of the 26/27 budget cycle and allows the council's next Chief Executive the opportunity to review their senior structure.

Key considerations

2. The council's Finance Director has announced she is leaving the council in June and in accordance with part 4, section 9 of the council's constitution, Employment Panel is responsible for the selection of a new post holder.
3. The Director of Finance is a critical role for the council being a statutory officer (section 151 of Local Government Act 1972) and to ensure that the right candidate is found it is recommended that a specialist employment agency with the necessary skills, networks and resources to 'head hunt' a field of qualified candidates is engaged to undertake the search.
4. A selection process and draft timeline in which an appointment can be made is proposed below. The timetable is designed to give Employment Panel multiple opportunities to assess the candidates.

When (subject to change)	Activity	Lead
w/c 30 March	Select and brief agency	Director of HR&OD
w/c 6 April	Briefing agency and microsite build	Agency/ Council
23 April – 22 May	Candidate search	Agency
2pm, 4 June	Longlisting Employment panel to longlist up to 8 candidates for selection day 1.	Employment Panel
w/c 8 June	Psychometrics	Agency
Wed, 17 June	Selection Day 1 and shortlisting Includes technical interview and presentation to Employment Panel After which Employment Panel will decide which candidates (approx. 4) to bring back for day 2.	Employment Panel
Mon, 22 June	Selection day 2 and final interviews Includes staff panel, stakeholder panel, lunch with candidates and final interviews with Employment Panel.	Employment Panel
10.00, Wed, 24 June	Formal Employment Panel meeting for decision	Employment Panel

Salary

5. The remuneration for this post is currently set at £110,628 (pay award pending) and this salary has been approved by Council in the pay policy statement in February 2026. In accordance with guidance under the Localism Act 2011 and the Council's constitution, any new salary packages over £100,000 must be agreed by Council. If Employment Panel decides to change the salary for this post, it can do so by recommending an alternative salary package to Council.
6. To support Employment Panel in their considerations, a salary benchmarking exercise has been undertaken. For benchmarking purposes there is not a direct comparator, but s151 Officer posts nearby councils and smaller county councils have been considered.

Appointment of an Interim

7. It will not be possible to make a permanent appointment before the current post holder leaves and an interim appointment for a minimum of 4 months will be required while the recruitment process takes its course. The council's employment rules delegate the appointment of an interim Director of Finance (s151) to the Chief Executive.
8. The alternative option set out in paragraph 1 of this report, suggests that Employment Panel may wish to consider making a longer interim appointment, and delaying the start of the permanent recruitment. This would allow the interim appointee to be in post for the whole of the 2026/27 budget cycle and would give the new incoming Chief Executive the opportunity to review their senior structure before making a permanent appointment.
9. The council has a suitably qualified deputy s151 officer who is able to assume all the relevant statutory duties while any permanent or interim appointments are made to this post.

Community impact

10. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, the council needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, qualifications, and mind-set, to operate efficiently and effectively. The council is accountable for how it uses the resources under its stewardship, including accountability for outputs and outcomes achieved. In addition, the council has an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies.
11. The post holder for this role provides strategic leadership to council services and has key leadership roles in Herefordshire, regionally and nationally. Without effective leadership, outcomes for communities and individuals in Herefordshire could be adversely affected.

Environmental Impact

12. The council's senior leaders have shared responsibility for the delivery of the county plan and corporate delivery plan and the inherent environmental objectives and outcomes within these plans.

Equality duty

13. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.

14. The mandatory equality impact screening checklist has been completed for this decision and it has been found to have no impact for equality.
15. The council's policies in relation to job evaluation and recruitment and selection pay full regard to the council's responsibilities as set out in the public sector equality duty. The council is a disability confident employer, and the council encourages applications from candidates from diverse backgrounds.

Resource implications

16. The salary for the Director of Finance is currently £110,628 and will be met from within the existing directorate revenue budget.
17. The establishment budget is available for this post and the table below show the salary cost of appointing to this post for a full year, together with any estimated recruitment costs.

Revenue budget implications	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000
Salary for post of Director of Finance (assumed start date of 1 October and excluding any pay award which has not yet been announced)	65	110
Estimated Recruitment Costs	20	0
TOTAL	85	110

Legal implications

18. The council is required to appoint a suitably qualified s151 officer to lead on the council's financial functions as prescribed in Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. Such a person must hold a suitable financial qualification as specified in s113(3) of the Local Government and Finance Act 1988.
19. Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001, SI 2001/3384 as amended by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015, SI 2015/881 say that where executive arrangements (Cabinet/Leader model) are in place, the appointment of chief officers and statutory chief officers and deputy chief officers, including their dismissal and the terms and conditions upon which they are appointed, is a function reserved to the Council. In the constitution this function is delegated to the Employment Panel (Part 4 Section 9 para 4.9.4 to 4.9.10).
20. Where cabinet executive arrangements are in place, before an offer of appointment is issued, the members of the Cabinet must be informed of the prospective decision, and the Leader may make any representations of 'material and well founded' objections to the decision maker (the council).
21. Any employee employed by the council must be employed on the council's normal terms and conditions and will be subject to all relevant policies and procedures as any other employee would be.
22. Any changes to terms and conditions must be approved by Employment Panel (Part 4 Section 9 point 32).

Risk management

23.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
The council will not have adequate arrangements in place to cover all s151 responsibilities	A well-qualified and experienced deputy s151 officer is in post and is able to cover all s151 responsibilities while any interim or permanent appointments are made

Consultees

24. None.

Appendices

Appendix A – Salary benchmarking information

Background papers

None identified.